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THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF...

**Going online:** Sony's network

PS2 gaming plans examined

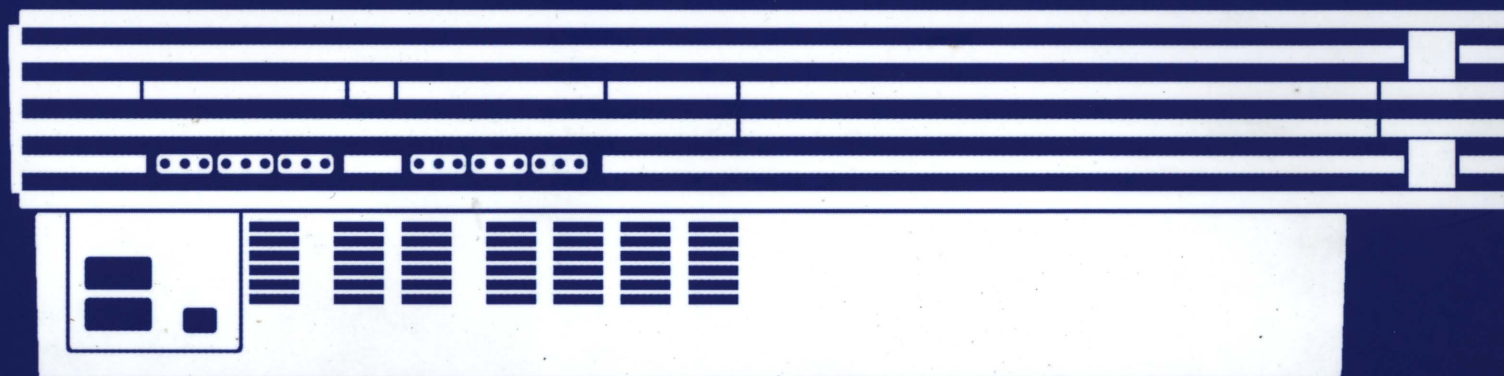
**EyeToy:** Facing the camera

**Dark horizons:** Post-Vice City,  
where now for adult game content?

**Top ten:** The PS2 games you must  
not miss, including Onimusha 3,  
Silent Hill 3 and Angel of Darkness

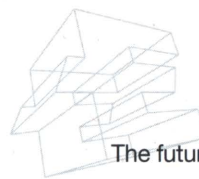
**Interviews:** Chris Deering,  
Phil Harrison and Jason Rubin

# PlayStation<sup>®</sup>2





PS2



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The future of electronic entertainment

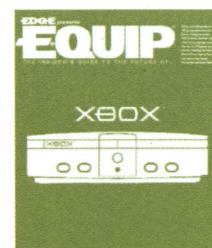
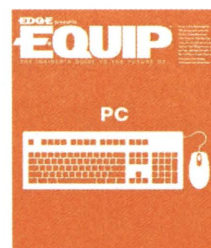
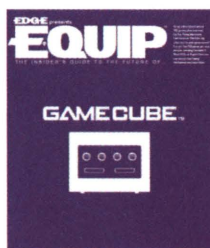
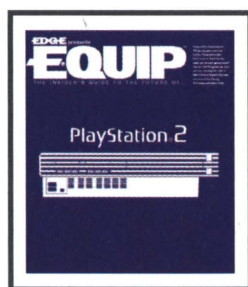
**W**elcome to this issue of **Equip**, the first in a four-part series of **Edge** specials dedicated to the future of today's gaming platforms, beginning with PlayStation2.

Among other things within these pages you will find exclusive interviews with the leading players behind the format, an exhaustive look at the online landscape at a critical point in the platform's development, and an examination into what makes the hardware tick.

You will find many words of optimism in this issue – possibly more than might appear in other editions of **Equip**. But then Sony has much to crow about. Its 'difficult second console' has been misunderstood, maligned, even mauled at various points throughout its life, but it is the undisputed, runaway leader in the videogame console market – a space also occupied by two of the most serious players in the electronic entertainment sector.

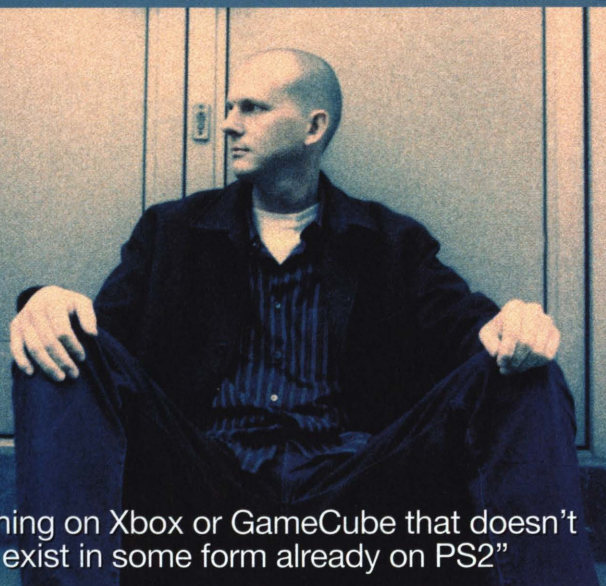
But the company still has a long distance to travel, and, with Xbox picking up steam, it cannot afford to be complacent. Fortunately for PlayStation2 owners, all evidence points to a company reluctant to rest on its laurels – even the briefest play with its revolutionary EyeToy peripheral (see p12) reveals a group of minds committed to rolling back boundaries and continuing the push to deliver videogaming to new users that has so typified its activities since the original PlayStation arrived in 1994.

Gaming may no longer be a niche pursuit, but **Equip** cannot resist also looking at ten upcoming PS2 titles whose values probably won't appeal to all the family (see p41). But we'll make no apologies for that...



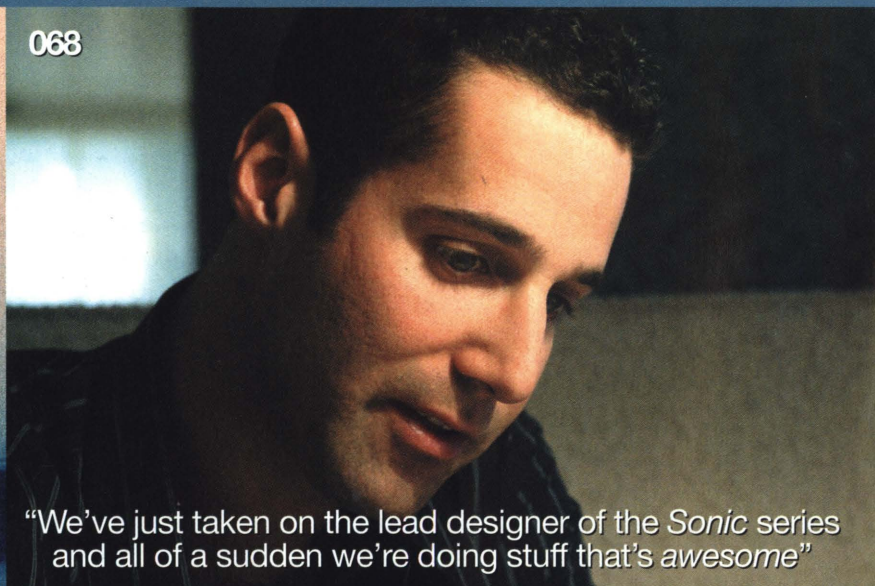


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"There's nothing on Xbox or GameCube that doesn't already exist in some form already on PS2"

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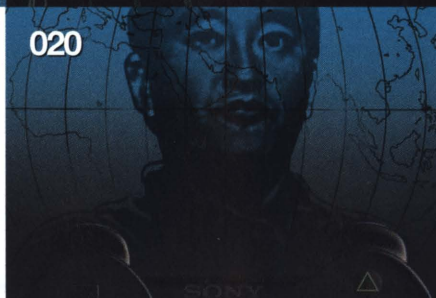


"We've just taken on the lead designer of the *Sonic* series and all of a sudden we're doing stuff that's awesome"

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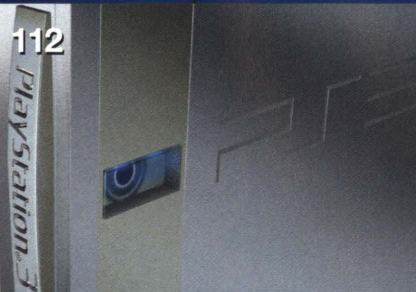
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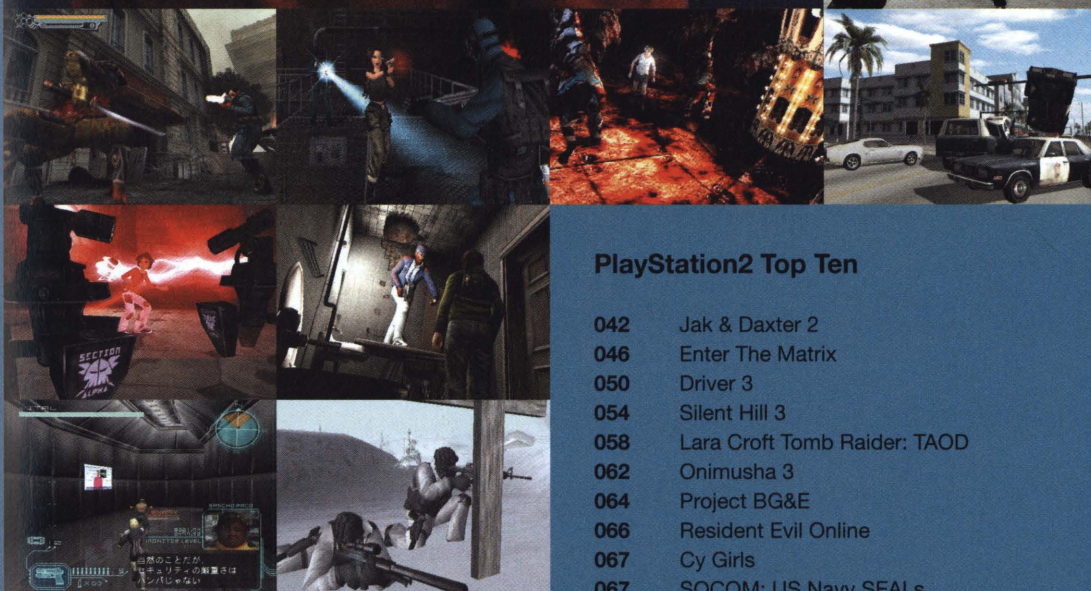
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It is February 2001, and Redeye is at the Tokyo Game Show, just prior to key launch announcements from Microsoft and Nintendo. Sony, meanwhile, is filling the floor of the show with a battalion of PS2 pods, regimented in rows, dominating the cavernous Makuhari-Messe building. The big PS2 games draw huge crowds; a snake of easily led people queue up for hours to get five minutes with the first playable demo of *FFX*. There are racing games, thirdperson adventures, puzzlers, but as you move away from the centre of the hall, the more the show becomes a battle for niche, and the crowds disperse. That's where RedEye heads – there are diet games, dating games, dancing games, and at least two games which let you conduct whole orchestras with baton peripherals. This is where RedEye spends 20 minutes rehousing lunatics in *One Piece Mansion*. This is where RedEye glimpses

quality, kinda teenage, but almost loveable.

"The show. Eet eez rubbish." *Almost* lovable. And he doesn't shy from criticism. Straight talking is admirable in a game journalist. Bravo.

"You ask why?" George scoffs like RedEye's an idiot. Perhaps he is. This is George's turf, after all. Having a specialised subject – another feather in the professional journalist's cap. RedEye nods.

"Ze PlayStation 2 – eet eez finished."

What?

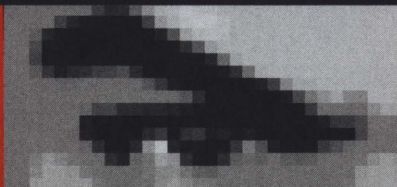
"Au Revoir, RedEye!"

Of course, all those qualities pale into nothing on the CV of someone who's clearly on crack.

Two years later and the PS2's domination over the home console market is unprecedented. It is true to say that a huge number of people bought the machine in Japan as a DVD player. It is also true to say that a huge number of people, particularly gaming's quick-to-cry hardcore, were

meets academia, but was let down by a lack of confidence from Sony and (criminally) the specialist press. *GTAIII* was that crossover, and, regardless of the unwarranted rockstar (no pun intended) petulance of its publisher, is the game that will influence more in gaming's future than any other. *Frequency* and *Gitarooman* took *PaRappa's* rhythm-action template and evolved it. *Zettai Zetsumei Toshi* and *Fatal Frame* do more for artistry in survival horror than all of Capcom's latest shock attempts.

And then there's EyeToy. Neophiles say the 'New 3D' is online gaming, but RedEye thinks that the introduction of the webcam – perhaps in tandem with the broadband adapter, or perhaps on its own with a bunch of mates and whatever additives you feel are an important constituent of party gaming – could be just as significant. It will put personality into gaming; not the sort of



## REDEYE

A sideways look at the videogame industry

Remembering the time when PlayStation2 was finished

*Gitarooman* for the first time, and wishes he'd misspent his youth with a space guitar.

Anyway, around midday, RedEye heads back into the throng to watch Bill Gates' launch speech meet with polite applause. Afterwards, he heads off to a noodle bar, lured by the placemat pictures of Gates with a burger. While he's making his way through the crowd, eyes prowling for the PVC-clad Xbox catgirls, he notices an old friend. RedEye taps him – for the purposes of this story, we'll call him, uh, 'George' – on the shoulder and says hi.

"Oh, RedEye! Bonjour, bonjour! You are looking unhealthy! And old, very old!"

Same old George. Now, some background. There are many, many French-Japanese game journalists in Japan. RedEye isn't sure if there are census figures available on this, but he guesses that the number is in the dozens at least, each of them trying to eke out a living in their dream country by selling titbits of information to the western press. Why is France a larval breeding ground for Asian wannabes? RedEye doesn't know, but that's why he has to type the next few lines in phonetics.

"So, how's it going, George? Okay?"

"Non." George isn't verbose. It's a sullen

disappointed with the launch software. It is true to say that PlayStation2 played a big part in killing one of the best videogame platforms of all time, the Dreamcast (although Sega played an even bigger part). And it is true to say that there has never been a console more reviled by those idiots who

**The mantra these fools repeat – 'Sony don't innovate' – is not true. So much so that's it's beyond blinkered, beyond naive, beyond imbecilic**

foolishly think they're doing gaming a service by playing player-h8r.

But the reason those fools damn a system they're too proud to try, the mantra they repeat as they stretch their 'PlaySatan' T-shirts over their ghost-white rolls of flab, the phrase they post on the Internet forums as they alt-tab between NintendoMakeMeHard.com and Princess Peach's triple-X Web cam – 'Sony don't innovate' – is not true. So much so it's beyond blinkered, beyond naive, beyond imbecilic, straight through offensive and into a cul de sac labelled 'Jerk'.

*Ico* may yet be the defining moment of this generation of console hardware, if the sequel doesn't surpass it. *Rez* should have been the crossover, where hardcore meets mainstream cool

personality contrived by lab-coat 'Cool Stuff' analysts who defined mascot-by-committee Blinx, but your own, and your friends'. And that will mean different people joining our games. The boys with the stretched, faded Peach-spunk-stained T-shirts won't like it. Who cares?

See, gaming used to be some exclusive club, and the best thing Sony ever did was blow it wide open with the PlayStation branding, crowbarring its way into the lifestyle press and giving us some kudos. It faded like fashion, but it's still there and it's still trying, pushing fat franchises like *The Getaway* at the national press until someone notices that gaming's still exciting. And behind that, in its development studios across the globe, it's continuing to produce new, innovative games for gamers, things that'd prove too niche on any other format – remember the nonplussed journos ignoring *Gitaroo* for *Final Fantasy* back in '01? But they're viable thanks to the breadth of the PS2 userbase. Popularity a curse? You couldn't be more wrong. Not even if you were George.

RedEye is a veteran videogame journalist. His views do not necessarily coincide with **Equip's**.



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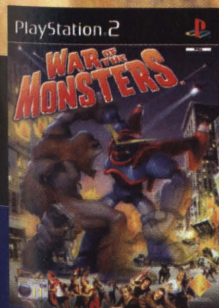
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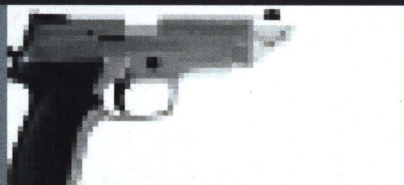
Now that the hype is old news, Sony is undisputed king of the global videogame hardware market, and rumours about the Cell architecture of PS3 are beginning to fly in earnest, we might begin to place PlayStation2 in its historical context, and see what it means in terms of the industry's evolution.

I want to argue that PlayStation2's greatest success has been as a first step in the necessary anonymisation of the videogame console, a process in which hardware itself begins to fade into the background. Consider, first, how it looks. Sony's machine is shy and retiring compared to its current competitors. It stands on its end, modestly slim, like a tiny skyscraper topped by aircraft warning lights. More than any other console in history, save perhaps the ill-fated Nuon project, the PS2 is designed to look, not like a games machine, but as a piece of mature consumer electronics.

Third Place": in other words, what you are buying is no longer a prettily packaged set of cutting-edge circuit boards; what you are buying is a ticket to another realm. The machine itself is no longer a thing but a destination. The hype around the Emotion Engine is notorious, of course; but what was notable about that much-abused phrase was that Sony was trying to emphasise experiential rather than technical virtues. The message to consumers was not "Let us tell you about our imaginative parallel processor design and our enormous memory bandwidth"; it was "Imagine what new kinds of games might be possible." The fact that this tease was never delivered on is more or less irrelevant compared to the massmarket success of this change of tack. In an industry where a newspaper advert run by a major high-street electronics retailer can still boast of the Xbox's '700Mhz gameplay

identifiable character: you can decide what kind of games console you want it to be. Rival consoles still, in a sense, have 'personalities': GameCube is good at brightly coloured Nintendoish fun (although, of course, you can play *Resident Evil Zero* on it), while Xbox is good at shouty, realistic American kinds of games (although, of course, there is some very interesting Japanese stuff on it too). But PlayStation2 is ontologically fluid. You can play EA Sports games all day long if you want to; but you can also sample the exquisitely characterful cartoony delights of a *Jak & Daxter* or *Ape Escape 2*, get your naturalistic driving fix with *GT3* and *The Getaway*, or go cheerfully fragging with *TimeSplitters 2* and the superficial but slick *Red Faction II*. What is the common core that makes all these recognisably PlayStation2 games? There isn't one.

Partly because of the anonymity and modesty



# TRIGGER HAPPY

Steven Poole

PlayStation2 and the anonymisation of the videogame console

DVD playback, of course, was the PlayStation2's killer app at launch: the likes of *Tekken Tag* or *Ridge Racer V* certainly did not represent the generational leap that gamers were expecting. Sony was lucky, or clever, to launch at a time when dedicated DVD players were not yet near-disposably cheap. Even now, I know of several PS2s in friends' households that are primarily DVD players, holding out the promise of an occasional game of *GT3* or *Pro Evolution 2*. And that's fine. As a first step in a Trojan Horse strategy to become the central digital entertainment unit of the living room, PlayStation2 has done its job remarkably well.

As for what I am calling the anonymisation of the videogame console, it can be seen further in the contrast of advertising strategy between Sony's first and second consoles. "Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation," we used to be told. That slogan was the continuation of a long tradition in the videogame industry of hyping the hardware itself, explaining what a powerful computational device the product was. But what of current Sony advertising? It speaks of the PlayStation2 as "The

speed', Sony remains ahead of the curve.

Longtime gamers may feel nostalgic for the days when consoles had more character, sporting interesting moulded-plastic designs and garish lettering. But that time has passed, as the market has expanded massively and grown up. I don't want my television or my hi-fi to have 'character' –

**I don't want my television or hi-fi to have 'character' – I want them to be minimalist, efficient, high-quality delivery systems for my entertainment**

I want them to be minimalist, efficient, high-quality delivery systems for the kinds of entertainment I choose. The muted aesthetic of PlayStation2 reinforces this idea, and the same should be true in the future for all videogame consoles.

Another virtue of PS2's anonymity – you might even call it blandness – is that it has managed to become all things to all people. After a shaky first year, there could be few 'hardcore' gamers now who would seriously argue that Sony's machine lacks for top-quality exclusive titles. But it's the range that's important, and that derives in part from the observation that the machine itself lacks any

of the console (and partly, of course, because of the massive installed userbase), PS2 has also become the home of the arthouse game. *Rez* came out on Dreamcast first but the PS2 iteration is technically superior. *Ico*, meanwhile, is an astonishing, haunting testament to the fact that a console without its own readily identifiable 'look' is

prompting designers to create totally distinctive worlds. With the appearance of *Ico* and *Metal Gear Solid 2* in the same year, for the first time it really made sense to begin thinking of lighting direction and cinematography in a videogame context.

And this, I think, is what really distinguishes PS2 from previous consoles in history, and from its current rivals. Technologically, it may be transitional and compromised, but it has still managed to quietly insinuate itself into millions of homes as a kind of blank canvas, on to which developers have painted their visions in an unprecedentedly rich variety of distinctive aesthetic styles.



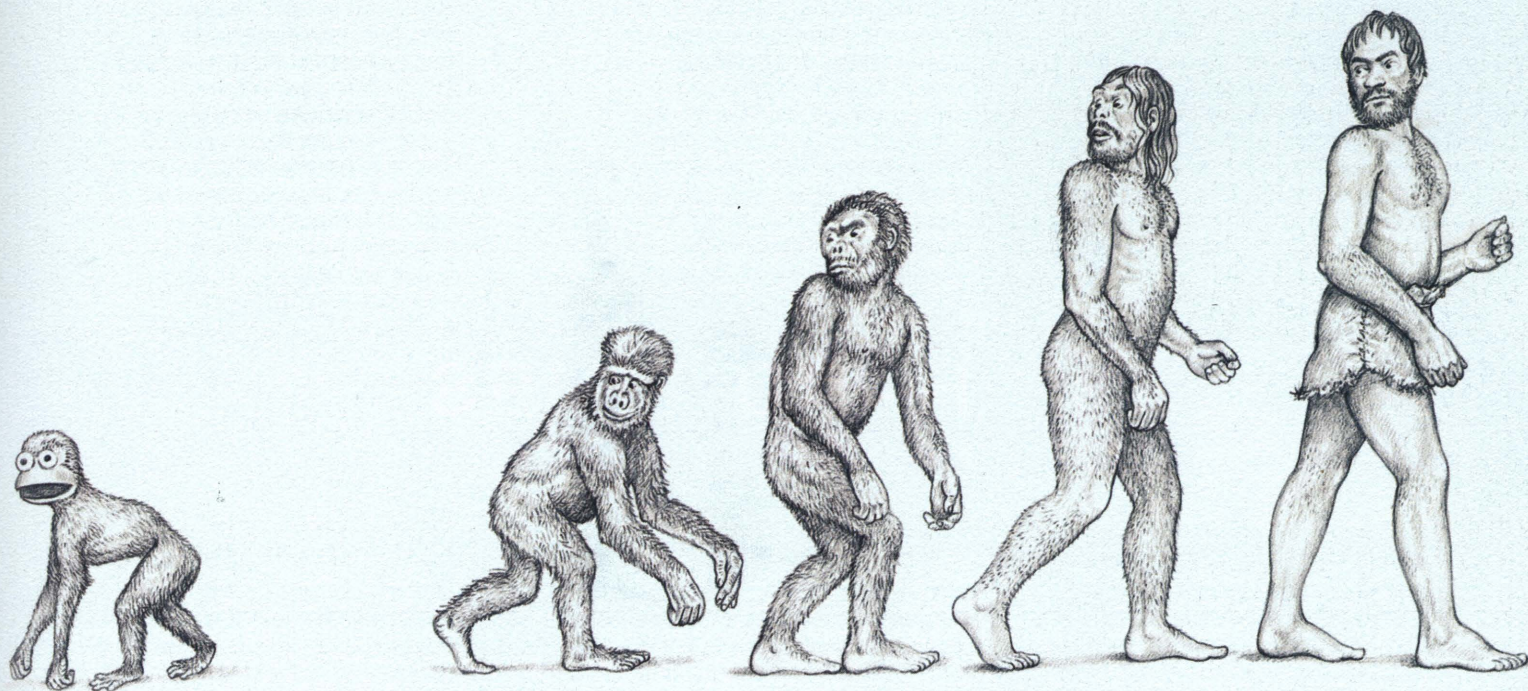
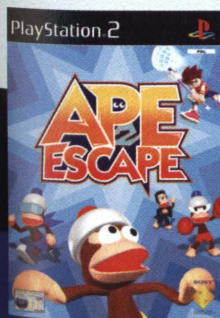


Fig 9. Evolution or Revolution.



Darwin may not approve but it's your job to stop the monkey mayhem as Ape Escape 2 debuts on PS2. An arsenal of weaponry should help you avoid all the banana skins on the twenty different levels. Ooh, ooh, go get 'em.



located in an office next to *PSM2* magazine, I'd watched as a steady trickle of PlayStation2 launch games arrived, were played, halfheartedly enthused over, and consigned to the drawer. Titles like *Ridge Racer V*, *Kessen*, *Fantavision* and *Tekken Tag* did nothing to suggest that Sony had made little more than a high-cost, hi-res version of PSone.

I blame *Gran Turismo 3*.

One balmy summer's day, Polyphony's gorgeous racer turned up. Jaws dropped, eyes bulged. I sauntered out to have a look, and – whenever deadline tasks kept the team at bay – 'helped' unlock the later stages. Then, when the joys of the two-player rally mode made themselves evident, I blew an entire afternoon head to head against another editor, who should have been equally busy doing magazine-type stuff.

Several days followed where real work took a

caretaker editor. A steady trickle of mediocre PS2 titles dribbled into the office, few of which were worth borrowing for the weekend, let alone of serious cash investment.

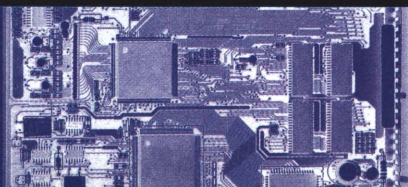
I had brief though enjoyable dalliances with *Jak & Dexter*, *Dropship*, *Baldur's Gate*, *Rez*, *Ico* and, of course, the genius that is *Grand Theft Auto III*. But by then, **Edge** was rampant with next-gennerly – GBA, Xbox and GameCube all promised great things, and it looked increasingly like PS2 just couldn't deliver – either on its promise of photorealistic graphics or envelope-pushing gameplay. Emotion Engine, my arse.

And, deep down, I knew that I just didn't like it. I didn't like the painfully chic casing; or the proprietary sockets; or the lack of joypad ports; or the interminable load times; or the fact that I couldn't use new PS2 memory cards with old PSone games. There was something obstructive

local GameStation, like some videogaming tramp, feverishly rummaging through the meagre stash of green and purple boxes in search of secondhand bargains or some prematurely released nugget. While on the other side of the store resides a swathe of blue. I'm the vegetarian in the burger joint; the Betamax collector at the VHS car boot sale. I stalk out, cash-rich and game-poor as usual (this has been going on for weeks), casting an envious glance at Sony's forbidden fruit.

Dammit, I want that much choice. I want to spend half an hour scrutinising the store-long shelves, agonising over my selection.

So now I'm nonplussed; my staunch anti-PlayStation2 stance crumbling, rebellious underdog allegiances waning. It's hard being on the outside looking in: even though you know the party's crap and you don't like anyone there, it's still nice to be invited.



## HARD TIMES

Steve Jarratt

Confessions of a videogame hardware addict

backseat to stealing sessions on *GT3*, and within a week I found myself wandering down town on a round-trip recon to see where the best deals lay. With EB offering the best bundle of games and accessories, a deal was struck and suddenly I'd again joined the throngs of the Cult of PlayStation.

*GT3* proved a fine source of entertainment for several weeks, but further hits were desperately elusive; *Onimusha*, *Smuggler's Run* and *MTV Music Generator 2* are the sole memorable highlights of this time, which pretty much says it all. To make matters worse, I'd started my PS2 relationship on the rebound from an import N64 with a 30+ library of US-sourced games. My threadbare collection of supposedly next-gen PS2 titles paled in comparison to *Super Mario*, *Ocarina of Time*, *Banjo Kazooie*, *GoldenEye*, *1080°*, *Harvest Moon*, *Ogre Battle*, *PilotWings*, *Mario Party* and a host of other, classic titles suffixed with '64'.

It felt like I'd swapped an ageing, cantankerous, but eager-to-please sportster for a soullessly efficient hatchback. Sure, I got from A to B, but the journey wasn't nearly as captivating.

By year's end, I'd moved on to **Edge** again as

about it. And I never felt that my efforts were rewarded in the way that they were with the N64.

So in preparation for an influx of new hardware – and mere months after it was bought – the PS2 was sold. Once again, my (relatively) early adoption had cost me dearly: a new PS2, two Sony joypads, two Sony memory cards, Sony A/V leads, carry

**It looked increasingly like PlayStation2 couldn't deliver – either on its promise of photorealistic graphics or envelope-pushing gameplay**

bag and a clutch of games for £150. Ggnrgh. I have the business acumen of a rodent.

Fast forward a year. Xbox, GBA and GameCube have all taken up residence at chez Steve. For a long time, games are played and thoughts of PS2 are limited to those of the 'good riddance' nature. *Halo* and *Super Monkey Ball* are suitably played to death, and much of Xbox's launch line-up receives decent play-time, while *Splinter Cell* and *Conflict: Desert Storm* rescue an otherwise quiet start to the year.

And yet...

Recently I've been trawling the shelves of the

For the time being, I remain undecided.

Already the distant horizon echoes with murmurings of PS3. Do I really want to jump back on the bandwagon, when it only might last for another six months? More seriously, in referencing my past woes, I look through the back catalogue of PS2 titles. Despite the intervening years, Sony's

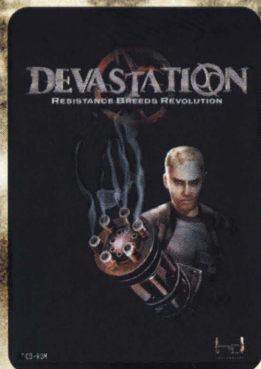
machine can still only boast a handful of genuine AAA titles (oh, don't wail and gnash, you know it to be true). Beyond this fragile bastion of quality lies a vast graveyard of adequacy, populated by the overinflated sixes, sevens and eights of the new-order 'average'.

It's all too easy to be seduced by the vast PS2 catalogue, and I must constantly remind myself that choice isn't a surrogate for quality. If I am tempted back to the dark side, it will not be because of a hundred games, or even a dozen – it will be because of one.

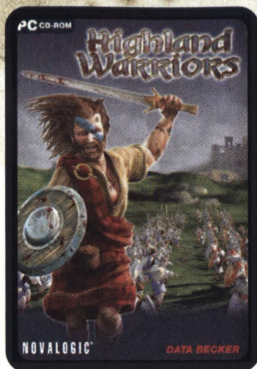
I blame *GTAIII*: *Vice City*.

Steve Jarratt was the launch editor of **Edge** magazine. He is a senior editor at Future Publishing Ltd.

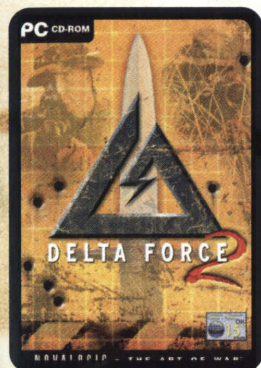




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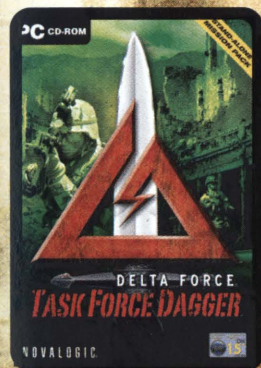
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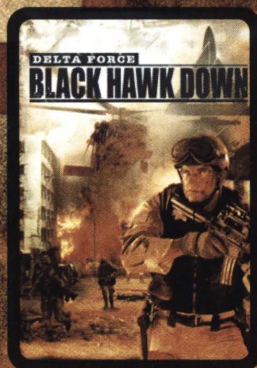
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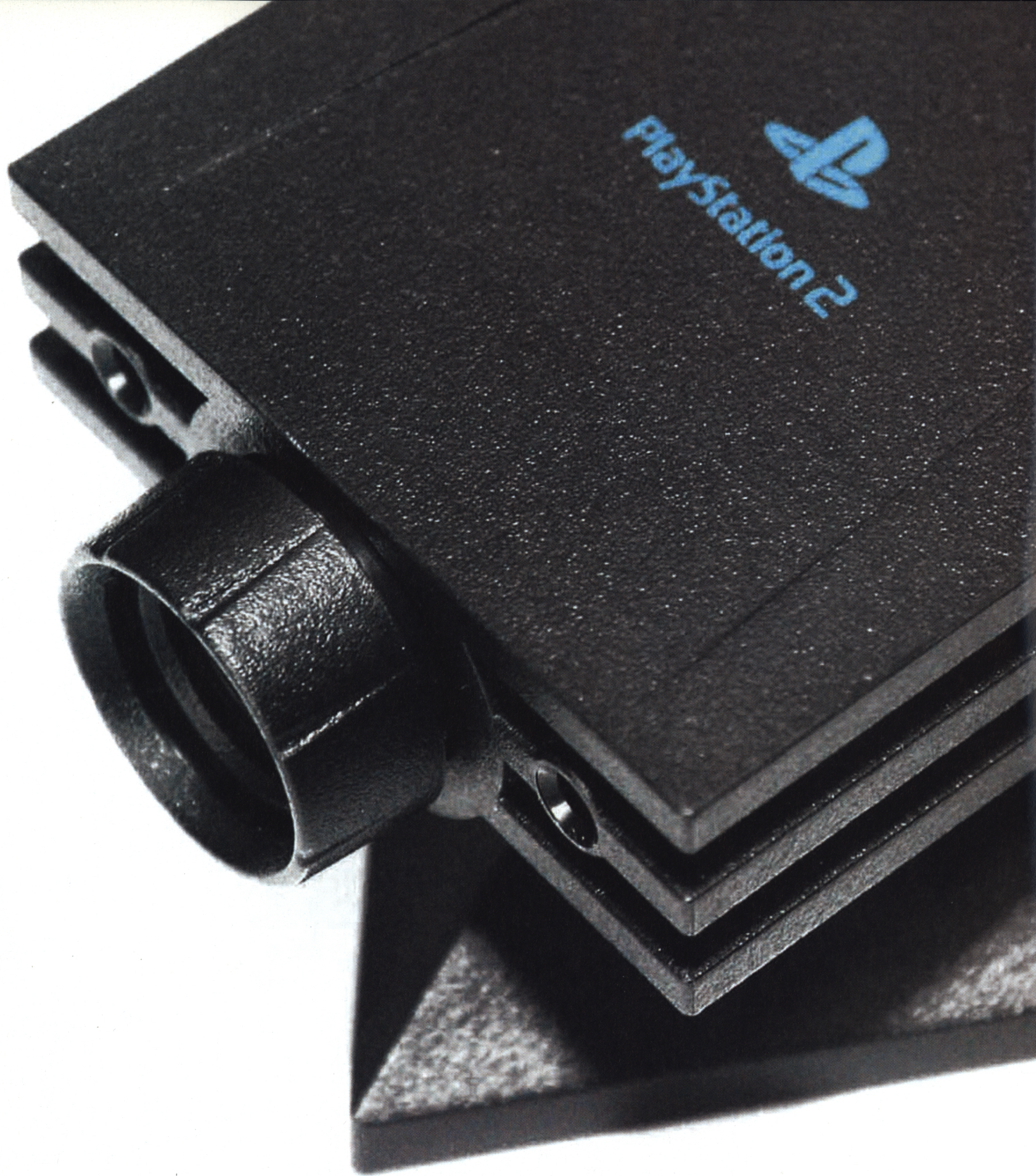
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# Facing the Camera

**T**here is something magnetic about this technology. "We were actually working on a different game when Phil [Harrison] came over to start up the development of EyeToy," says **Peter Marshall**, lead coder on the project, stretching his voice over the chillout music that echoes around the empty bar where **Equip**'s interview is being conducted. "There was this conference where we got to see the technology, and at that point he laid down the challenge to the studios to see who could incorporate the technology. At that point we were coming to a bit of a brick wall with the title we were working on, so we switched track. We felt this could be something quite big."

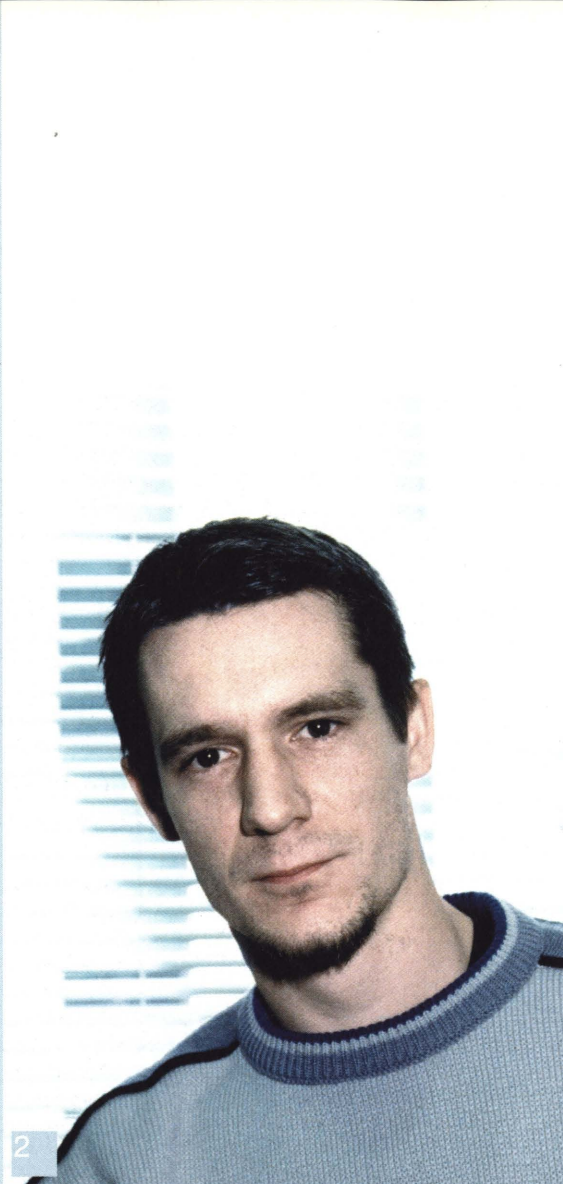
**Ron Festejo**, EyeToy producer, grins. "I'll never forget that, actually. Everyone who worked for Sony Europe sat down, all the development studios, and then Rick Marsh came on, showing off this new technology. And I remember he showed that asterisk one I showed you, where you've got the stars all over your hand, and I was sitting down like *this*," – he mimes jaw-dropping, eyes wide.

Lights, camera, rhythm-action: **Equip** visits Sony's London studio to see how a UK development team plans to change the (inter)face of gaming

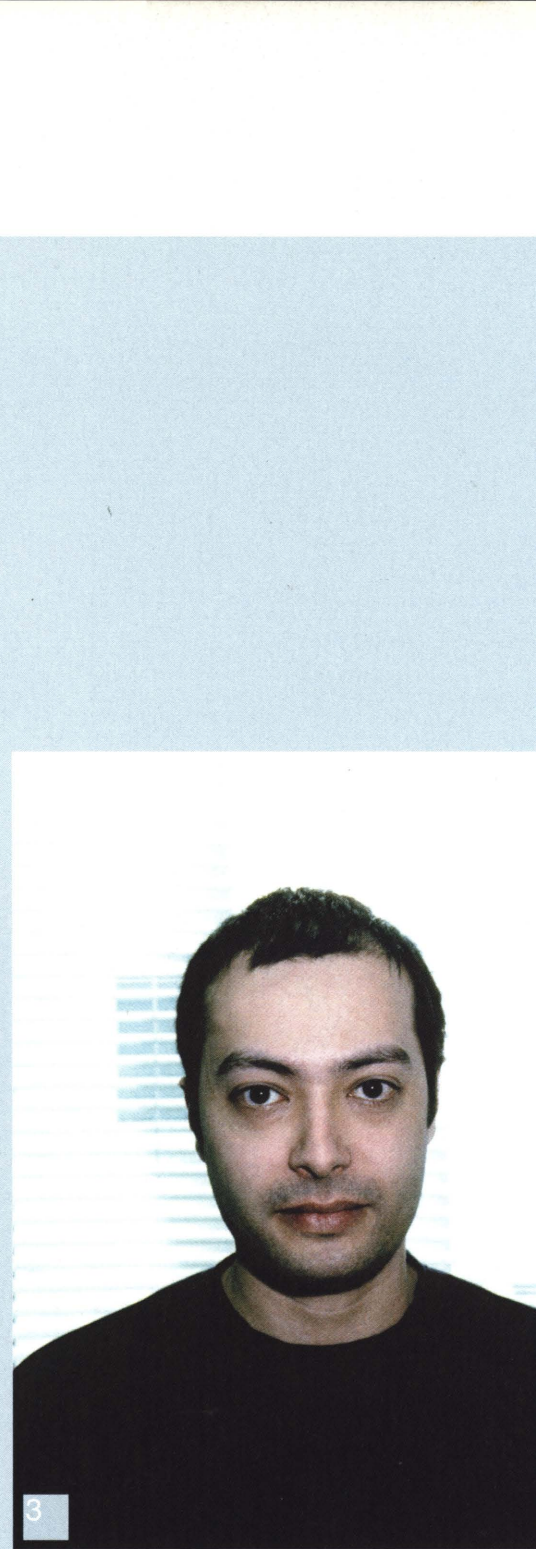




1



2



3



Demos of camera tools were based on colour detection, but EyeToy is movement based

- 1 Ron Festejo  
producer
- 2 Craig Kerrison  
designer
- 3 Peter Marshall  
lead programmer

"We're actually going for a younger audience. Well, a younger and older audience. A lot of people are scared of using a gamepad, so standing in front of a camera's an easier format"





"Now, bearing in mind we're working on your average thirdperson game, and he goes like *this* and moves things. The audience at the front they all went," – sharp intake of breath – "and I saw it and went, 'Jesus.' I was looking across to the studio head mouthing, 'I want to do this.' So, after the demo was over I went straight over to Rick, who was still playing around with the demos and stuff, and told him I wanted to do something with it. And I think in a matter of months they were in our studio setting up. Even back then I realised – well, playing games for a long time, things come and go, but seeing something like that – you can just see the potential..."

All that from the asterisk game. Well, it's not so much a game, just a tech demo, the first thing that the EyeToy team demoed to **Equip** a few hours earlier. The USB Web cam – black and ribbed for your thematic hardware aesthetic pleasure – sits on top of the TV and films you, placing you on the screen. Next to you are a collection of simple low-res stars, and by moving your hands about, you can push them around the screen. A click on the joypad sends the stars into a beard shape, and Marsh wears them on his chin. He moves his head, and they follow. It's a beard of ASCII characters, and everyone laughs. This shit never gets old.

After that, the team takes **Equip** through a few more of the kit's tech demos. One has the player moving through a 'Harry Potter'-style wizard's study by manipulating a bright pink ball in 3D. By drawing shapes (a triangle, a circle or whatever; *Black & White* fans will recognise it as the gesture system) you can cast spells, which transform the environment and the nearby elves. But this has little to do with EyeToy – this 3D world is much more complex than EyeToy's 2D cartoon visuals and Game & Watch dynamic; it's like comparing *Primal* to *Bishi Bashi Special*.

"For me I think it's very important because it has the potential to be massmarket," says Festejo, making the point that this is the first step into a new technology, and it has to be accessible. "Everyone knows how to use it, it's USB, you just plug it in, and I think that's the main difference between having it on the PS2 rather than the PC. We want to push it to as many people as possible. It's very easy to see what players are doing when they're playing the game, and other people can just pick it up straight away."

Craig Kerrison, designer, agrees. "We're actually going for a younger audience. Well, a younger and older audience. A lot of people are scared of using a gamepad, so standing in front of a camera's an easier format."

EyeToy's games are simple but spectacular. They place the player onscreen, surround him or her with sharp, colourful, cartoon graphics, and ask him or her – and there really will be hers this time – to complete simple, movement-filled, hyperactive tasks. Everything about it is designed to draw people in; keep it simple, stupid. But oddly, that goes against everything **Equip** has been told by pushy publishers for years; mainstream consumers have a reputation for judging games on visual content, and there's been an unwritten rule for half a decade that videogames have to be

**"It has the potential to be massmarket. Everyone knows how to use it, it's USB, you just plug it in, and I think that's the main difference between having it on the PS2 rather than the PC"**

3D or they just won't sell. Isn't there a chance the 2D styling will deter the graphical bigots?

It's clearly a line of thought that Festejo, a dedicated gamer (and, like the other members of the team that **Equip** talks to, a complete Nintendo fan – later in the afternoon, he will gush about Miyamoto-san's London visit) has been down before. "At E3 we showed it to the press, for the first time in fact, and I was so nervous that day. I was thinking, 'God, in the next five minutes, they're all gonna arrive and be like, 'What's this, 2D? Pah,' and I was like, 'Jesus, what am I gonna do?'"

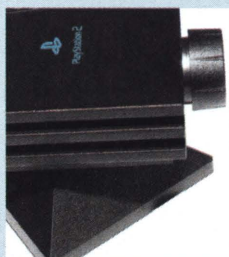
"But then Kutaragi came down just before it opened, and he had a look at this stuff, and he was going, 'These are amazing, really, really good'. So that gave me a boost, and when the crowd came in, the journos came in, they were just going, 'My God, this is so different! It's a party game', and I was so relieved – that's exactly what we're going for. Everyone thought it was cool, really new."

"They didn't even notice the prototype graphics," concurs Kerrison.

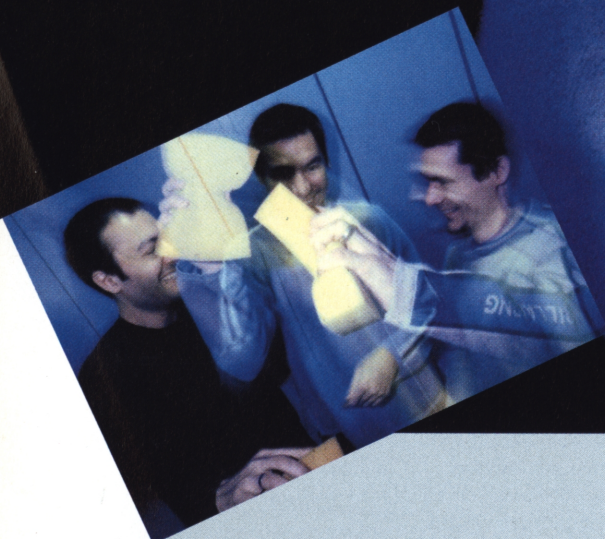
Festejo nods, "Yeah, that's it. For me, I've been playing games for a long, long time, and nothing really changes. There haven't been any shifts for a while, so I don't think the graphical style here is really important."

So, things haven't shifted visually – but does EyeToy have the potential to be the start of another paradigmatic shift in the way games play?

"Oh, it's possible, yeah. Yeah. This is the first of its kind. There'll be some people who won't get it, but – well, you say, 'They like their driving games', but if there was a driving game that had a feature that'd work with the camera, they'd get something new. And I











think with every genre there's the potential to have something you can use the camera for."

Like, for example, video messaging. The EyeToy Web cam has a built-in microphone, and one of EyeToy's extras is the facility to record short video messages on to a memory card, then give them to your friends. Clearly this isn't the most economic way of passing on a message to a pal, but it doesn't take a great leap of imagination to see how simple it'd be for Sony to take that process online. And then there are all the things that audio-visual input could add to existing genres.

"I mean, there's lots of potential for a less direct use of the EyeToy," says Marshall. "Almost incidental uses for it in other games. What we're doing at the moment is taking a snapshot of your face for the saves, and you can imagine bolting that on to a lot of existing games."

And other future visions?

"It's very difficult to say. Obviously as a Web cam, the future applications, they could go anywhere. As far as gaming goes, we want to try and get as many cameras out there as possible. I think it'll all depend on how it's supported."

Ah. The support issue. EyeToy, of course, is a hardware add-on. Famous other hardware add-ons you may remember: the Mega CD, the 32X, the Nintendo Power Glove...

"Yep."

They don't sell.

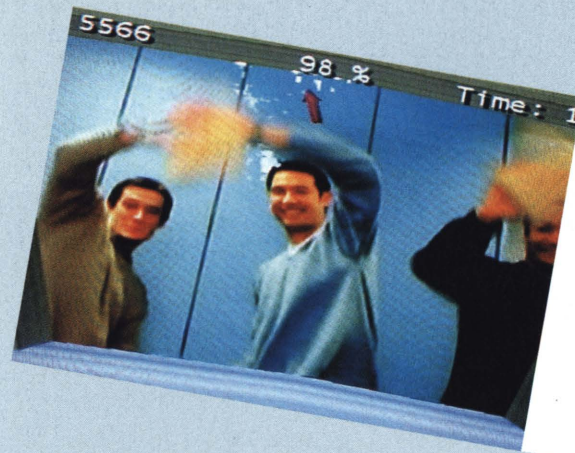
"Yep, we're fully aware of that. When I started out I wanted to steer clear of other things, like the Power Glove, or, you know, the Sega stuff. Whenever new peripherals are released I think consumers are like, 'Yeah, well, whatever'."

Kerrison breaks in, "But the difference is this one's so cheap. It's coming with the game, for the price of a normal game, so people will be more likely to buy it."

"Plus," Festejo adds, "You get all the games we've shown you today, and others, and video messaging, with the camera included... and all for the price of a PS2 game. If we can push it, I don't have any doubt it'll be successful."



facing the camera



The demographic you're going after here isn't typical for a Sony machine, is it?

"No. When we first started working on the project, we were told, 'Listen, PlayStation2, 18-25, you've got to be careful'. But we were thinking that it had so much more to offer than just to the 18-25 group, and showing it at the PlayStation Experience pretty much reaffirmed that. I mean, you've got kids of three, and guys at the age of 90 playing it. But there's also the hardcore. I mean, four or five mates would come along, 17, 18-year-olds, and they'd all be encouraging each other to have a go, but maybe only one of them would. And he'd be playing it, just laughing his head off, and all of a sudden the rest of them get interested too."

And this is the key statement, the most pertinent thing **Equip** hears all afternoon, and the reason that, if the marketing behind EyeToy is right, and people get to hear about it, experience it, it could be absolutely huge:

"We always refer to it as the sort of game that people play when they get together. At Christmas, for instance. If you were just sitting down with your family having dinner, and after dinner you suggested having a game of *Tomb Raider* or something, they'd suggest you go upstairs and play it and they'd carry on chatting. But if you were to suggest Pictionary, they'd all be enthusiastic. And that's where I'm trying to draw the line here - make something that everyone can relate to."

Those games, then. **Equip** plays five during its short stay in the EyeToy games room. The first, *Wishy Washy*, is the one you're most likely to have heard of. Two players stand in front of a dirty window and make a wiping motion with their hands to try and clean it as fast as possible. Like all of the EyeToy toys it's a simple plan, but some people have a hard time adjusting. "The younger players get closer and closer to the screen, to the point where they're actually trying to wipe the screen," giggles Marshall.

*Kung Fu* has the player stand in the middle of the screen, while tiny ninjas jump at them from the left or right. Essentially they can go high or low on either side, and the player must punch them away by striking out in the appropriate direction. Every third level there's a bonus round where wooden planks must be

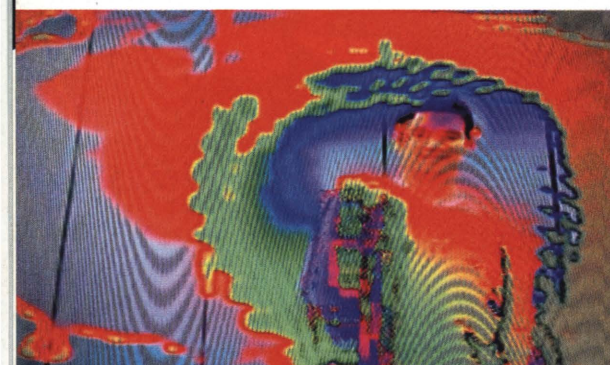


Visual filters give players the opportunity to view their adventures in a different light





Equip wore big yellow gloves during the demo of *Boxing Chump*, but they won't be necessary for the game. They just make you look silly, which is more fun for those watching





broken. Get up to the eighth or ninth level, and ninjas are flying from all directions, and you're flailing like a madman, and everyone else is laughing – one of the key points of the software. As before, this shit never gets old: this must be the thousandth time the EyeToy boys have seen someone make a fool out of themselves, and they're still laughing at **Equip**. And **Equip** is laughing too. How weird is that?

In *Boxing Chump*, robot boxing, the player stands to the left of the screen, and, well, boxes with a robot. That's all there is to it. You move forward, backwards, punch high or low and duck punches yourself. This was Festejo's concept, though not quite how he envisioned it, "When I originally came up with it, I wanted it to be like *Punch Out!!* – you're standing there, actually boxing. We couldn't do that, so we had to find out a way to get around it, and moved it to side-on. And although I'm not 100 per cent happy with it, it works really well and it's really cool. I'm just slightly gutted that we couldn't get the player punching at the screen."

*Mirrortime* is the simplest. Standing in the centre of the screen, the player is surrounded by four balloons, one in each corner. Some are green, some are red, and the player must pop the green ones and avoid the red ones. After a couple of rounds, the screen flips left to right. After a couple more, it flips upside down, or the top half goes left to right and the other half stays normal, or some confusing combination. It is disorientating, and brilliant – players freeze, scared, unable to decide which way to move their arms or body lest they hit the wrong colour. It is genius, but came from a suggestion from a focus group, not within the team.

"The great thing about this tech," explains Festejo, "is that it's so new that you'll show it to someone and instantly they'll come up with five things you can do with it. It's just trying to grasp those ideas, and choose the right ones. The technology is still quite early, and there are still a few limitations. The demos we showed you today – they're not quite ready,

because there are still issues with them. But the simple games, there are loads, and it's just a matter of choosing the right ones."

And some games didn't make it. Kerrison laments, "*Bongo Breaks* was my favourite that didn't make it. It's a drumming game where you get to play drums all around the screen. But we couldn't quite get the speed working on it."

"There's the air guitar one too," adds Marshall. "Where literally you're playing guitar like *that*." He mimes someone, well, playing air guitar like a lunatic. "But there were a couple of issues with trying to get the strumming right, trying to get the notes at the right time. But we're still working on it, we still reckon we can get that one. When people see that one they fall about laughing."

Because, yes, you guessed it: this shit never gets old.

The final game **Equip** sees is the EyeToy team's own interpretation of *Fantavision*. The player stands in the middle of the screen, and coloured fireworks (red, blue or green) launch

**"The great thing about this tech is that it's so new that you'll show it to someone and instantly they'll come up with five things you can do with it. It's just trying to choose the right ones"**

from the left and right. Touching them tags them for detonation, and similar colours must be chained together (or linked with a white firework). When the player's happy with their combo, or when they're starting to panic because the fireworks are arcing off the screen and there are more arriving ready to be tagged, they hit the detonator in the bottom left. It is gorgeous, and intensely satisfying. It is also the clearest indication that this, EyeToy as a whole, is just the start of something. There is so much potential. But it could have been so different.

"I think that when we first set out to do this," says Festejo "People from marketing were like, '18-25, hardcore, hardcore'. And



Because the technology detects movement, any part of the body can be used to fight off the tiny ninjas. Dedicated fighters could even use weaponry, although living room collateral damage may prove expensive

we were saying, 'Hold on a second, this could be so much more'. Surely we should make it appeal to as many people as possible?"

So they did. And the pay-off?

"I was at the PlayStation Experience, and we had three pods showing three games, and I was standing at the back of the queue, which was half-an-hour long. So I was standing at the back, having a glass of water, and there was someone from marketing in front of me. So I got a little bit closer, and he was laughing his head off – then he turned to me, and said, 'This is great!'"

The cackle Festejo gives – the impression of the marketing man, not the real-life laugh **Equip** has heard echoing all afternoon, every time Festejo recalls someone playing boxing or mirrortime or whatever – is one of financial success. But there's a more altruistic motive.

"But we've got an opportunity to make a game that appeals to everyone who has a PS2, and how often do you get to say that? So I'm sort of glad we didn't listen to all those people who were like 'adult, adult, adult'."

A few hours earlier, and **Equip** finishes jumping around like an idiot, and collapses on the sofa. It is something new; something exciting; but above all, something absolutely *fun*. You know what?

**Equip** is glad they didn't listen, too.



This minigame (left) has players punching the speakers in time with the music, the appropriate one denoted *Samba-style* by CDs which radiate from the centre. Juggling a ball carrying the image of a friend's face (right)





## Mission: Accomplished?

For Sony, the online clock is ticking. You can play PS2 over networks in the US and Japan, but not officially in the UK, where Microsoft has successfully launched its Xbox Live service and you can even enjoy online play with a GameCube. But the company is doing something about it. **Equip** discovers exactly what's going on



Online console gaming. Sega saw it as the USP destined to fend off the competition when the Dreamcast arrived on the scene back in 1998. The company's Dreamarena would provide Net access to millions of gamers for the price of a local call, while the machine's 32K modem gave owners a taste of online gaming that had previously only been the enclave of the PC fraternity.

Or so the dream went. In reality the machine simply didn't do the numbers, while the 32K modem – which was actually (surprise, surprise) a 56K modem in disguise – still couldn't handle the demands placed upon it by the likes of *Quake III Arena*. The result? The console quickly faded in a cloud of rival brand loyalty and PS2 stole the limelight. What Dreamcast's birth/death agonies did achieve was to sow the concept of an online console in the minds of a gaming public hungry for innovation. Which wasn't such a shoddy an epitaph, after all.

From the start, then, Sony had to be seen to make promises about online connectivity to keep the faithful on side. Sega had upped the ante, but its leading competitor stacked its chips higher by attaching the magic word 'broadband' to its project. High-speed connection that would rule out plodding framerates, curb the frustration of repeatedly being kicked off servers, and bring about the advent of streamed video feeds, pay-per-play demos and episodic game releases. Another dream, but surely if anyone could make this vision of a working, global, console-based network a reality, it was Sony.

Then came the waiting. Three E3s passed, and three times SCEA president Kaz Hirai took the stage at Sony's press events pointing at the back of the PS2 or holding the US Dualband Modem aloft like some homecoming hero from a football match. And every time he did, something happened in a territory other than Europe.

### Online Fantasies

In Japan, Square and its PlayOnline servers led the way with *Final Fantasy XI*, the most ambitious instalment of the *Final Fantasy* series ever. Mirroring the technology behind such PC titles as *Ultimate Online* and *EverQuest*, the Japanese developers bought in a stack of Hewlett Packard Net servers but chose not to provide a targeted broadband modem from the off. Instead Square, and Sony, relied on the popularity of the triple-A franchise to spur gamers into organising USB ethernet connections. Ultimately, it was a move that would irrevocably damage sales of the title and stall the adoption of network console gaming in Japan. When a broadband modem did finally arrive it came as an integrated part of Sony's HDD package, the cost of which effectively turned all but the truly devoted off to the idea of getting involved. To date, only around 130,000 copies of the massively multiplayer RPG have been sold in Japan with a meagre





15-30,000 gamers logging on to play daily. All that may well be set to change, though, as Sony moves its new, non-HDD specific Broadband Navigator away from online distribution via its Japanese Web site and out on to the high street.

### Sony gets started

So the first, faltering steps in Sony's online plans were taken. Yes, adoption was, and still is, slow, with a market hobbled by cost and hardware availability. But it was a start, nonetheless.

**"The device is working surprisingly well out of the box, although a number of gamers are being forced to buy routers in order to connect a PS2 and PC simultaneously"**

Another E3, another proud pointy finger from Hirai and – shazam – America launches its Dualband Modem in August 2002. An altogether more orchestrated affair, it displayed a greater confidence on the part of Sony and, importantly, a selection of HDD-free launch titles – *NFL2K3*, *NFL GameDay 2003*, *Madden NFL 2003*, *SOCOM: US Navy Seals* and *Twisted Metal Black Online*. All of which were quickly followed by *ATV Offroad Fury 2*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, *NBA Live 2003*, *Tribes Aerial Assault* and, most

recently, *EverQuest Online Adventures*. It was a prestigious output in such a short period, certainly, but how have US gamers adapted to the new online world streaming into the back of their PS2s? **Equip** catches up with leading US PlayStation2 journo **Eric Bratcher** to find out if the same teething problems that plagued Japanese users had been duplicated Stateside.

"Things are definitely coming on strong in the US, despite a few notable hiccups," he explains. "The Dualband Modem is selling well – approximately 650,000 units

A powerful start, then, for the US model, and one soon to be bolstered by the arrival of online party title *My Street* and the musical head-to-head licks of Sony's *Amplitude*. Even Square is in the process of beta testing *FFXI* on PC, which has again renewed speculation about an imminent announcement concerning the US version of the HDD. So, for UK gamers with import machines and an existing broadband connection, the revolution has already started. But what of the rest of those out there with their PAL PS2s?

### ENA in the UK

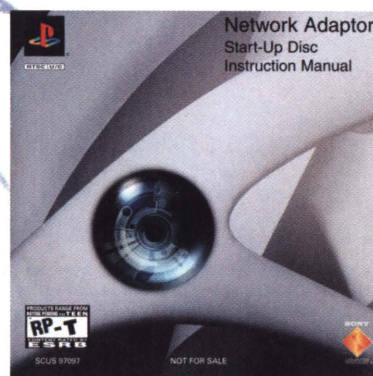
SCEE's official statement of October 31, 2002 confirmed that its launch package would mirror that of the US. As a result, it will contain the Ethernet Network Adaptor (ENA), a disc that will include an unspecified number of online demos – the US version had two – along with a detailed step-by-step user guide. The whole package will retail for around £40 and the UK will be the first country in Europe to test the waters of PS2 networked gaming, with Germany following a close second. The question is: how will we contend with the numerous obstacles that obviously stand in our way?

Use any existing narrowband connection, log on to the technical support forums for *EverQuest Online Adventures* and you'll be faced with questions about connection problems, port triggering and

so far – although it was hampered early on by short supplies and the need for a few extra solid games. As for actual connection issues, the device is working surprisingly well out of the box, although a number of gamers are being forced to buy routers so that they can connect both PS2 and PCs simultaneously. Also, the inclusion of narrowband has led to a few gamers dragging the odd deathmatch to a grinding halt. For the most part, though, it's clear that PlayStation2 is ready and able to embrace online gaming."







server dropouts to name but a few. It's a far cry from the plug-and-play responsiveness that most console gamers have come to expect. In fact, the more forums you read, the more PC everything becomes. Arguments about the decapitations in *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* fall away and you find yourself in the ninth circle of tech hell alongside broken IT managers and stacks of out-of-date Dilbert calenders. It's a worrying realisation that instantly provokes a host of concerns. Are UK gamers likely to suffer from a graduation of server support depending on who develops the game they're currently playing? Would it really be a good idea to invest in a router if you've already got a PC? In the absence of a browser, how will non-computer-

owning gamers learn valuable information from support sites? And what of the future of broadband? Are we really on the brink of that non-stop data-streaming dream we mentioned earlier? Questions, questions, questions... When faced with so many, the only real option is to shine up those apples, visit the proverbial horse's mouth, and see if it'll bite.

### Shiny apples

Can we find anywhere selling apples between Paddington and Soho Square, the location of SCEE's HQ? No. What we can find, though, is the vice president of business development, **Nainan Shah**, ready to chat about all things networked and PS2 shaped. **Equip** opens by asking him about



US PS2 owners have been able to get online with an inexpensive dualband modem and Start Up disc. The HDD unit is still to arrive



SquareSoft's PlayOnline servers have fed the needs of Japanese gamers wishing to play *Final Fantasy XI* over the Internet. But consumer interest has been weak, with only 30,000 players using the service daily

### Broadband 101



Through its broadband partnership with Sony and a prior record of specialisation in PC network gaming, Telewest was an obvious

first choice when it came to the technical practicalities of getting the ENA up and running. **Equip** tracked down **Mark Mulder**, the company's senior commercial manager, and asked him what problems and choices he thought PS2 gamers would face in their quest to get online.

To start with we covered the basics of setting up a broadband connection to your home. This involves checking with your local Internet Service Provider (ISP) to see if it offers an ethernet service that runs using a compatible modem – you'll need to make sure it's RJ-45 friendly as that's the cable coming out of the business end of Sony's ENA. If it doesn't, ditch it and head over to [www.ispreview.co.uk](http://www.ispreview.co.uk) to find one that does. Get the necessary technology in place and then choose which of the price packages is best for you.

Mulder clarifies: "To get a good gaming experience the console gamer will need a true broadband service of 512Kb/sec and above, which will cost between £25-£30 per month. A 1Mb/sec service costs around £35 per month. The most important aspects for the online gamer are low latency and bandwidth availability, both of which aren't readily available for 256Kb or 128Kb users."

Once you've organised connection it simply remains for you to plug the PS2 into the wall – ensuring you have a memory card with 137Kb free slotted home – and work slowly through the ISP setup process described in the ENA's detailed instruction manual. It's a moderate learning curve that quickly results in you playing *something* online as long as servers are up. But it's still one that's a long way from being a completely 'out of the box' experience. In the face of this, **Equip** asked Mulder if he thinks the time is right for console broadband. "Absolutely," he asserts. "Research shows that up to 20 per cent of broadband users already play games against someone online and we're expecting this trend to increase sharply as online gaming goes mainstream and PS2 gamers get addicted to what it has to offer."

And of the future? "Here at Telewest we believe that mainstream network gaming will be the next major broadband application after file sharing, and one that will be a major driver over the next three years. PS2 is 'the daddy' of consoles and a vital part of our plans to continue to work with our gaming partners to innovate in this space."



#### Stuck into the middleware with you



Sony is quick to stress that its 'open' approach to the online features of PS2 is one that will encourage business rather than restrict it – a

move reminiscent of its attitude towards the existing thirdparty peripheral market. As such the SCRT middleware system, talked about by Shah in **Equip**'s interview, is just one package that developers can utilise to take the pain out of networking their titles.

**Jeremy Hamill-Keays** of Terraplay – a Swedish company with an official licence to distribute online PS2 middleware – told **Equip** why developers might chose not to build online solutions from the ground up: "To deliver a game service which covers any range of titles requires a dedicated approach. This includes supervision of games, load balancing, alarm notification and maintenance. For most developers these features are just not interesting, but are essential for delivering to the online market. Our system, the Terraplay system, takes care of all these issues."

So, if you've got something in the region of £30,000 and a stunning series of games you'd like to broadcast to the world then this company may well be the online equivalent of Criterion. For your money you'll receive the ability to run your titles with a server CPU dedicated to each – so even if your game isn't a chart topper, players will still receive a reliable and speedy connection. The main draw for gamers, though, has to be the clever way the system optimises bandwidth. Hamill-Keays explains: "Gamers, while playing, can only really concentrate on about three things at once. This means although there may be 15 opponents in a race, an individual player is probably only focusing on two or three cars ahead and one behind. Using Terraplay these objects – these cars, for example – can be prioritised so that updates are sent to the player as a high-quality stream. Other data, such as distant scenery, is deprioritised and can be sent at a lower refresh rate thereby optimising bandwidth."

Overall, then, Terraplay offers a highly customised experience that goes some way to lessening fears that smaller developers will not have the technical clout to provide a reliable online service. The good news is that it's a free market and one in which customer satisfaction, to both the developer and the public, will be paramount.

how Sony had dealt with the technological issues, both inside and outside the company.

"Our approach on the whole, and in the network area especially, is very open," he begins. "We haven't got all the answers internally and we're not trying to tell the development community how to attack this area. What we're trying to ensure is that there's a core of technology for our internal studios, and that this is also available for external developers who don't want to get into low-level development. A good example of this is our SCRT middleware for network gaming – a basic suite of enabling technologies. If an external company wants a ready-made solution, then this is available for them to use."

The current situation in the US is that each PS2 online title has its own dedicated server, meaning you effectively have a different identity and password every time you log on. What **Equip** wants to know from Shah is whether the same would be true of the UK network. "Our open philosophy once again applies to the server and community technologies and to hosting solutions as well," Shah elaborates. "We have our own infrastructure, but it's perfectly open for developers and publishers to create their own solutions. In the US the model has been that the *publisher* of the





product has taken responsibility for the actual server management."

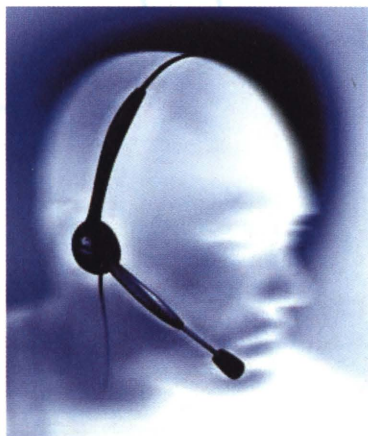
### No Xbox Live

So it appears that, unlike Xbox, there won't be one central gateway through which you'll play online. Which is ironic, really, as the model Sony is favouring is one that has already been successfully implemented within the PC community. It's a thought that opens questions about the mass appeal of the ENA. Does Shah expect the device to be adopted quickly by PS2 users? Or will it end up being the preserve of a tech-savvy minority?

"If you'd asked me the same question about PSONe at the time of its launch I'd have to say that both cases were true," he says. "Gaming was niche but it was destined to become massmarket. I think the same is true of network gaming. We have to accept that it isn't something every man in the street goes home and does. At the moment, we see it more as an enhancement. As a greater number of people touch and feel the additional experiences that online gaming offers, we think it will become more common for people to decide it will be worthwhile to connect consoles up to their networks."

Again that use of the word

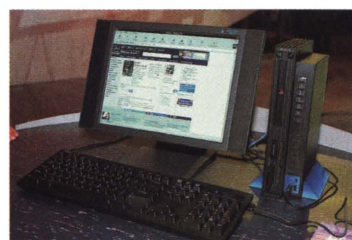
"There'll be new experiences for consumers that they've never been able to have on a console before. And, to some extent, they'll take a different form from those on PC"



The SOCOM communications headset is packed in with the game, and will be used in other titles



Sony Computer Entertainment America chief Kaz Hirai (above left) has used recent E3 expos to shout about PS2 online elements such as its HDD. Once upon a time, however, the company was making noise about a deal with Netscape to enable PS2 Web browsing (above right). Things have been quiet on the topic of late



'experiences', echoing SCEE president **Chris Deering's** comments in an official press release from October 2002 when he said he planned "to provide consumers with the broadest selection of new online experiences and entertainment from a variety of sources." So what are we talking here? A shift in paradigm? The birth of new genres?

"There'll be new experiences for consumers that they've never been able to have on a console before," reckons Shah. "And, to some extent, they will also take a very different form from those on PC. Things like the team aspect of SOCOM. It's the start of a whole notion of collaborating with a group of people that you can't see but can speak to. It's an area that will obviously

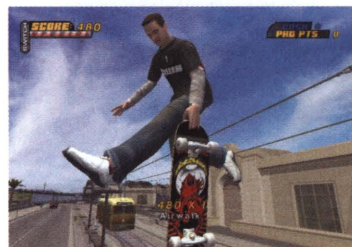
something that's very popular already. Which, in itself, brings about issues of security – something that consoles are very capable of providing. Then, if we move over to look at what's happening in Japan, we can see that the 200,000 owners of the Broadband Navigator and HDD are able to operate movie channels and get involved with photo editing and management activities."

### Security measures

Security-sensitive consoles? We can see what he's getting at there. The PS2, even with its hard drive fitted, will probably not have a read/write option, making the ripping and burning of CDs problematic. Not impossible – the inclusion of digital output

### Vision online

UK gamers have been able to take their PS2s online for a while, albeit unofficially. Few, however, have done so. Both *Tony Hawk's Pro Skateboarding 3* and *4* come with a network-compatible multiplayer mode that requires a plug-in USB Ethernet Adaptor (for example the DSB-650TX from [www.dlink.com/products/](http://www.dlink.com/products/)) and a PC with an existing broadband connection. That's two games in the bag before Sony launches its ENA, although it's easy to see how the convoluted setup could have put users off.



evolve as people get better and better at collaborating and will want to do this in more complex and challenging ways. As for applications outside gaming you need to look at the PS2 itself. It does a lot of things. It won't make you a cup of tea in the morning but it will play your DVDs – many people also forget that it's a rather good CD player. As the PS2 evolves, and as a new generation of consoles come in the future, we'll see the suite of things you can do on top of playing games increase." Shah goes on to briefly mention the distribution of music and films via broadband before incorporating both these ideas into the notion of gaming itself evolving towards the peripheries of the media: "Take music products that incorporate elements of mixing. The downloading of tracks is



puts paid to that – but it will be something you'll have to work at to achieve. As for the potential of an online version of *MTV Music Generator* where you'd be able to trade samples and tracks live or, perhaps, a *Dance Dance Revolution* face-off to the ripped song of your choice... Well, it's enough to trigger a distracting sequence of rhythms and dance steps somewhere in the back of your mind. Pushing them aside, **Equip** scrambles to catch up with Shah to find him explaining why the UK version of the ENA will be broadband only: "There are issues that arise when a platform attempts to blend too many different access technologies. The reason why we've gone for broadband only in Europe is that narrowband is less entrenched here. We've been slower to adopt Net access than the US. As such, we think that broadband will be taken up a lot quicker. More fundamentally for us the exciting games, the things that are really going to turn people on and enhance the platform, are the broadband products. That's why we decided to take the plunge and look forward."

It's hard not to be impressed. It's a bold and risky move, especially when you consider the amount of obstacles even the most educated of gamers will have to overcome if they wish to get online. So, how is Sony planning to deal with this potential technical stumbling block?

"One of the key areas to address this is in the communication of solutions to the consumer," explains Shah. "We think the playstation.com site will be very important in explaining what the options are – and there are a lot of them – and what the best solution is. The other area is directly on the customer service side, to make sure the teams within our company have got a sufficient understanding of what's going to be required. Previously broadband was adopted by technologists, but now there'll be a reason for someone to go broadband without them being heavily into the Internet. So they'll need a level of support, and dare I say perhaps even a quality of support, that networks have not been used to providing."

It's still a long way from the 'out of the box' approach to online gaming a lot of PS2 owners were hoping for, isn't it?

## Wired world

The announcement of online games for PS2 has become an almost daily occurrence. Even Ken Kutaragi himself – SCE's president – hasn't been averse to upping the quota with a few surprise revelations at a recent press conference held in South Korea. As a result, you can now expect online versions *Syphon Filter*, *Arc the Lad* and *Bomberman* by the end of 2003, as well as a new property from Tecmo called *Breaker*. Back here in the UK we've already seen *Destruction Derby Online Arena* running and have had confirmation that THQ's FPS *Fire Warrior* will also sport online features. Add to this *Amplitude* and *My Street* from Sony as well as *Nobunaga's Ambition Online* from Koei and you're looking at the kind of mass developer support and widespread appeal that should see gamers seeking broadband connection in droves.

### EverQuest: Online Adventures



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEA

While Japan gets its MMRPG kicks with *FFXI*, the US is coughing up subscription fees for the privilege of personalising its own Dark Elves before beating rats over the head with a selection of rusty daggers.

### Amplitude



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEA

Sony's musical sequel to *Frequency* sees you creating individualised characters called Freqs, and then battling them online along to 20 fully licensed songs across three nightmarish difficulty settings.

### G-Police Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEA

Another wild card, but one that just might buck the trend of online play perpetually gravitating towards deathmatch. Squad-based, co-op crime fighting in squad cars with wings... Criminally intriguing.

### Syphon Filter Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEA

What can Gabe Logan offer players that Sam Fisher hasn't already covered? Online connectivity, that's what. Another one from the rumour mill, but one many will be hoping – in a skewed, nostalgic way – will become a reality.

### Arc the Lad: Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEJ  
Publisher: SCEJ

Following hot on the heels of *Twilight Of The Spirits* comes news that Sony Japan is planning an online compatible version of its PSone/PS2 action RPG series. Five *Arcs* in total, then, and not one released in the UK...

### Hardware: Online Arena



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Studio London  
Publisher: SCEA

Not as tactically sharp as we hoped for, this slightly dumbed-down version of *Dropship* does offer some attractive military-flavoured carnage by catering to 16 different vehicles at once. Pity they all seem to be tanks, though.

### This is Football 2004



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEA

Sony's much-maligned football title could finally have an ace up its sleeve to play against *Pro Evolution Soccer*. The engine might still not be as tidy as we'd like, but the allure of an online league is loaded with potential.



### ATV Offroad Fury 2



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Rainbow Studios  
Publisher: SCEE

Offroad, but definitely online and another title that takes customisation seriously – a must if you're hoping for any kind of network individuality. Sadly, it only caters for four players online in either race of freestyle modes.

### Bomberman Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Hudson  
Publisher: TBC

The gameplay may have only altered fractionally since its first iteration, but the option of penning unsuspecting strangers between walls of fire is made all the more appealing with the online option.

### Breaker



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Tecmo  
Publisher: Tecmo

A Mars-based team shooter that sees your four-man squad going up against hordes of toothsome xenomorphs. No doubt it'll include the inevitable online deathmatch but, thankfully, this'll be spiced up by a very arcade weapon set.

### Colony Wars Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEE  
Publisher: SCEE

Just a scrawled rumour on the back of a ladies toilet door at Sony HQ for the moment, but it's got the name, the fan base and the wide open spaces necessary to create some tempting laser surgery via broadband.

### Destruction Derby Online Arena



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Studio 33  
Publisher: SCEE

The arenas themselves seemed somewhat small when we took this for a test drive over a LAN recently, but the combination of racing while knacker your opponent's vehicles sans weapons might draw the fans.

### Midnight Club 2



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: 11/4/03  
Developer: Rockstar  
Publisher: Rockstar

City racing across LA, Paris and Tokyo as one of seven petrolheads straight out of 'The Fast and the Furious'. Plus, a total of 25 cars and three superbikes make this the online racing experience to play while waiting for GT4.

### My Street



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEE

Party games for all the family – so long as they can remember their default router address. Travel the chatroom town, enter houses and then challenge others who are logged on to Tetris-styled face-offs.

### Nobunaga's Ambition Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Koei  
Publisher: Koei

No guarantee this'll ever leave the Japanese network, but it's already looking a whole lot better visually than Square's FFXI. Another MMORPG but one that will include all your favourites from the Dynasty Warriors saga.

### Planetside



Out US: 20/5/03  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Verant  
Publisher: SCEE

A Halo beater for PC? That's what's promised here in a game for which Sony's US Web site (station.sony.com) is looking for playtesters. Think this'll never come to a console near you? Think again...

### SOCOM: US Navy SEALs



Out US: Now  
Out UK: 29/5/03 (full game) 31/3/03 (online only)  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEE

Sony's first online title in the United Kingdom will see you confined to the 16-player online deathmatch option with the chance to direct AI-driven voice-activated SEALs in the singleplayer version come May.

### Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: EA  
Publisher: EA

You were able to upload your score cards to EA's leaderboard with PGA Tour 2003, but this one is promising the full 18 holes while competing against other swingers across the world's finest greens for real-world prizes.

### Tribes Aerial Assault



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Inevitable  
Publisher: Vivendi Universal

An instinct-sharpening FPS in the finest tradition. It's got a oneplayer campaign mode where the AI's smart enough to harden you, but the joys of an online capture-the-flag match with jetpacks is really where it's at.

### Twisted Metal Black Online



Out US: Now  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEA  
Publisher: SCEE

Working on the popular notion that killing each other is fun, TMBO exchanges soldiers for cars and presents junkyard arenas filled with firebombs, homing missiles and nukes for your deathmatch pleasure.

### Warhammer 40,000 Firewarrior



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Kuju  
Publisher: THQ

The backstory for this game will no doubt be a huge draw for tabletop battle fanatics. For the rest of us, though, this is still looking to be a well-crafted FPS from the 40K universe, with a slick online multiplayer component attached.

### World Rally Championship Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: SCEE  
Publisher: SCEE

For a slightly more skilful take on a day at the races, WRCO will offer the accuracy of updated car and driver stats for the new season before letting you pit your wits against a full complement of human competitors.



"It's tricky. The primary area of activity will be in relation to routers and modems. You know there are a lot of other devices – laptops, PCs – that need to be connected in the modern home. A number of companies have already started to produce PlayStation solutions within their boxes and effective support from them is also important. So the consumer won't have an entirely plug-and-play solution. I wouldn't pretend that going on to a broadband network isn't the same as pulling something out of a box and plugging it in. They will need to turn to their suppliers for the answers. And that's

really the focus of what we're doing by trying to change the mentality of some of the suppliers in the chain. We're still working on that one [laughs]."

## A changing Sony

Again, another well-executed sidestep. It's not for Sony to organise the servers, as that would interfere with the intellectual property of the developer. And it's not up to Sony to force solutions on consumers with the freedom to choose what type of broadband connection they want to their homes. It's the middle road of all middle roads... Perhaps it's a situation that's come about as a result of a learning curve triggered by a difficult Japanese launch.

"Sure, the whole organisation has needed to change its mentality," agrees Shah. From QA to development, even in marketing, working with new people in new ways. The volume and demand in the US has led us to be more confident. It's been a big surprise for the content community. I think now we can safely say that PS2 is the most successful broadband console ever. There's more of them connected worldwide than anything we've had before and we haven't even got going in Europe."

What of Xbox, though? Does Shah see Sony's alternative, perhaps more measured, approach being a worthy competitor to Microsoft's Live service?

"I wouldn't describe our approach as measured," he counters. "Although I think difference is always an advantage, and I think broadband isn't everything PS2 has to offer, nor is it everything the consumer wants. Yes, it's part of our future and it's part of PlayStation now but there's also a lot of other, different things we're making noise about. So the overall message, although it may appear diluted, is if you look at what we're doing in this area it's still very, very substantial."

Just how substantial?

"We're bringing out between 40 to 50 titles in the next financial year, but I think the key issue is not the quantity, it's the genre mix, the variety. As far as the experience goes you've got different middlewares, different technologies emerging – with the best ones winning. But at one end you've got the experience of *EverQuest* with its commitment and subscription fees. You can lose your life to it. Then you've also got some more instantaneous gratification.

## Planet of the apps

Among the swelling list of developer support for Sony's online plans, there are currently three titles that stand out from the crowd. *Resident Evil Online* and *Star Wars Galaxies* have the kind of massmarket draw that will turn the ENA into the next

'must have' peripheral after the official memory card. And while *GT4* has yet to be officially confirmed, the majority of industry opinion is solidly behind this being the flagship title around which everything else for PS2 online will revolve.

### Gran Turismo 4



Out Japan: Late 2003  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Polyphony Digital  
Publisher: SCEE

It was the next project that workaholic Kazunori Yamauchi had pencilled in on his calendar after *Concept* and we know that it would be unwise for Sony to release this without online capabilities. As to whether the aesthetic purity of the series will finally be compromised by the inclusion of damage effects, or whether we'll see the return of the popular dust clouds that enshrouded previous rally sections, that's all in the hands of the very unforthcoming Sony. The only official statement to date mentions a "hope to have something running this year [2003]" so all attention is now focused on E3 and the possible announcement of a pre-Christmas release date.

### Resident Evil: Online



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: Capcom  
Publisher: Capcom

Unlike Sony, Capcom has been vocal about the online plans for its survival horror series. A four-way split of players working together in an effort to escape Raccoon City before the T-Virus takes hold. The twist to the action this time round? The fact that all eight of the characters the player can choose from are from the street, with only occasional access to the high-powered weapons the STARS members used in previous titles. So expect makeshift implements of defence, a focus on teamwork to solve puzzles and keep the gang of shamblers at bay, plus a new level of interaction with NPCs who could just as easily run as decide to help you. Read more about it on p66.

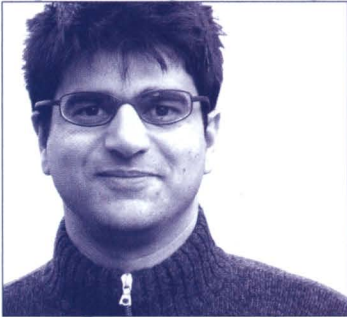
### Star Wars Galaxies



Out US: TBC  
Out UK: TBC  
Developer: LucasArts  
Publisher: Activision

Out on PC on April 15, this LucasArts/Sony joint project is going to be the MMRPG of all MMRPGs. Initially there will be nine planets from the 'classic' era of the 'Star Wars' universe (ie, episodes four to six) to travel between as well as eight different species for the player to choose from. So, if you've ever dreamed of being a Wookiee shop keeper, here's your chance – although, unfortunately, you won't be able to rise through the Imperial ranks and become your own Darth Vader, so rebels only need apply. As your character progresses, more and more options will become available to you with the acquisition of land/property, and the rank of Jedi Knight, being at the top of the social ladder – the creators wanted to ensure that gamers had to invest time and energy if they wanted to wield Force abilities. Another earnable attraction is entry into the various 'theme parks' situated about the galaxy, where famous NPCs – Luke, Han, Leia et al – will be located, who, in turn, will present some of the toughest quests in the game. It all adds up to an incredible level of detail which, it's believed, will lead to a PS2-specific version released later in the year.





Nainan Shah, VP of business development, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

You've got *SOCOM* with its voice recognition, communication, teams... But you don't lose your life [laughs]. And then you've got *Hardware* – even more instantaneous, where someone like me can enjoy it without getting shot in the first 15 seconds. And *Destruction Derby*, another great, very novel title. So, the range of different experiences means there should be something there for most people. It's something that will keep coming, keep building..."

### Price and release

There are many factors to mull over, then, and lots of issues for interested gamers still to resolve. As for an accurate cost and definitive release date, these things have become blurred by Sony's recently announced soft launch. As of the March 31 you'll be able to pick up an ENA from the official Web site ([www.uk.playstation.com](http://www.uk.playstation.com)) for £40 plus £5 P&P – providing you own a PS2 and already have broadband connection to your home. In the Network Starter's Pack, alongside with the hardware, you'll receive an online-only copy of *SOCOM US Navy Seals* (you'll get the full version free of charge once it's released) plus a USB headset for use with the game. Which is good news for those lucky enough to be signed up for the trials. For everyone else, though, it means yet more waiting for a finalised launch line-up, a high street release date and further information on how the HDD will fit into this increasingly complex equation. What *Equip* can tell you now is that *SOCOM* has a confirmed UK release date of May 30, which, when coupled with *Midnight Club 2*'s arrival by April 11, gives a reasonably tight launch window for things kicking off in the UK.

### The future online

And so *Equip* comes away, sauntering back towards Paddington caught somewhere between excitement and a sense of disappointment that the out-of-the-box scenario is, ultimately, a fiction in these broadband-lean times. The incentive is still building with each newly confirmed online title, the ways and means on the cusp of being a reality. The only real hurdle Sony's online plans will face in the coming 12 months is how effectively this new way of doing things, what Shah calls this new 'mentality', is conveyed to the gamer casually thumbing a copy of *Tribes Aerial Assault* in HMV. It all centres around that Field of Dreams belief of 'build it and they will come'. And, inevitably, a proportion of the four million PS2 owners in the UK will.

See, it only takes a fraction of this massive installed base to be tempted by its burgeoning catalogue of online titles, to ensure the Ethernet seed falls on fertile ground. Initially what will grow from this conception won't be some illusory Eden, rather a barren, sparsely vegetated land that will require tools for cultivation – the ENA, the PC, the ADSL modem, the broadband cable guy's drill... But it *will* become fruitful, there is no doubt about that. And if all of this sounds like too much hard work, don't get involved. The early adopters will carry on regardless. They'll fill up the message boards with fault notifications and suggestions for improvement, while the boys in the back rooms perfect their craft and eventually bring about a new iteration of networked technology for the next generation of consoles. The ultimate question then in this struggle to get online is a personal one. How do you want to be remembered? As a frontiersman or a tourist?

"A game like *Hardware* is instantaneous – someone like me can enjoy it without getting shot in the first 15 seconds. And *Destruction Derby* is another great, very novel title"

### Industrial revolution

Scanning through the impressive number of online titles listed across these pages and hearing Nainan Shah say with conviction that between 40 to 50 titles will be in place by March 2004, it's obvious that the dev community are solidly behind Sony's online plans. *Equip* approached some of the key players in this opening market to gauge their views...



"New audiences, and those already exposed to different gaming experiences will demand innovation. I think the advent of broadband at a console level

will see smaller, easily accessible games appear at the start. I'm talking of quick competitive titles that people can play for short amounts of time. That's why, initially, the sports range will be important. There's a fan base with these titles that likes to compete, that likes to play against friends albeit in a social get-together. The games will have to be easily accessible for this to come about, though – everyone understands *FIFA*, for example."

Mathew Webster, F1 producer, EA



"I, for one, am a person that will play games online, however the vast majority of my gaming will remain offline. If the number of game types increases and the cost of gaming online becomes more reasonable then I think that it will become more popular. However, at the end of the day, I still think that PS2 online gaming will only account for a small percentage of the console's usage as a whole."

Arthur Parsons, producer, Traveller's Tales



"All the statistics show that the uptake of broadband is growing at a massive rate year on year. So, I don't believe it'll only have niche appeal – especially where

consoles are concerned. The sort of games we can expect to see on PS2 will be far more massmarket. The key to online console games for me is keep it simple and make it play."

Jeremy Smith, managing director, Core



"I bought a Network Adaptor the day they shipped in the US. So, I'm already a big fan of *SOCOM* although, to be honest, I personally find it superior as a singleplayer experience. As for the UK market, I think PS2 online will drive broadband adoption, but it will be interesting to see what the uptake is. Good as the initial titles are, I don't think the killer PS2 online app has been announced as yet."

Alex Ward, creative manager, Criterion



"The impact of broadband console gaming is going to be enormous. Firstly, there will be a whole bunch of creative options open to console developers that weren't there before – things like episodic gaming, paid-for extra level downloads and community game extensions like competitions and 'show off' recordings. It's these that will start to drive game ideas that, in turn, will drive extra revenues or at least make them possible. From this, whole new creative areas will open up that aren't yet feasible in a PC market which doesn't have a clear revenue model."

Ian Baverstock, business dev director, Kuju





Interview:

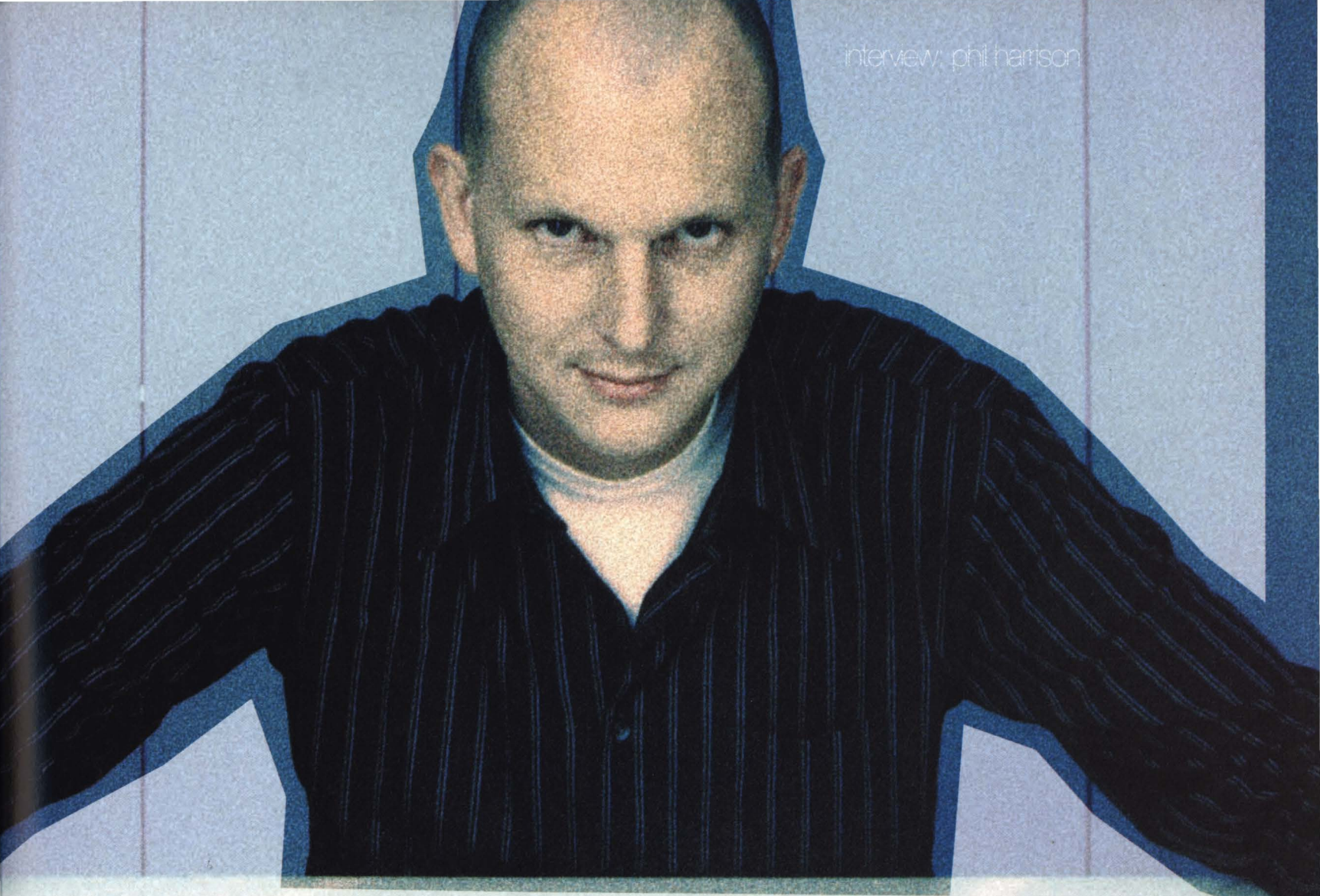
# Phil Harrison

When it comes to PlayStation2 games in Europe, one man rules them all. Or at least he's at the top of the publishing chain, giving guidance on every aspect. **Equip** quizzed him on the future of the platform

**T**he last time anyone carrying an **Edge** business card interviewed SCEE's **Phil Harrison** at this length (when he was a Sony US facility), a factual error crept into the final article. It was a simple misquoted figure. Now, some years later, he still remembers it. He doesn't mention it during the interview, but you can tell it's still there, playing on his mind, whenever he thinks of **Edge**.

But he has to have a long memory because, as the person overseeing all of SCEE's videogame output, his role is a vital one. This time around, **Equip** listened to his answers very carefully...





**What are your responsibilities at Sony?**

Well, I manage development, so day to day that involves running the London, Cambridge, and Liverpool internal studios. QA, which is also up here in London, our external development team and our licensed international development team. External development means working with teams that are, by definition, external – people like Evolution Studios, who did *WRC* for us. The international products come either from our sister companies, SCEI or SCEA, or people like Sega, Square, Namco, where we have long term relationships. I'm also generally involved in

the running of the SCE business, as a member of the management team. And in the afternoons I play golf.

**So, what's a typical day?**

Tomorrow I'm coming into the office first thing for a product presentation from an external developer who's been working on a prototype for us for the last nine months. They've come to the end of their final milestone, and they're now going to show us the product. We're having a meeting to review what they've been working on, and we'll decide whether we're going to go forward with the product or not. I can't say

what it is, because that'll give the game away – literally – but it's... the rebirth of a venerable brand of our company... one that hasn't been around for a while.

**Don't you feel a bit like a teacher sometimes, marking other people's work?**

I've got to be careful that I don't do the kind of red ink, rubbish rubbish rubbish. It's very easy to be a critic, very easy to say no. It's harder to be constructive, positive and contribute to the value of what somebody's been doing. And just on a human level, the team of 15 people have

been working for six months, and it's very important business for them. There's a lot of money involved, and you can't deal with it lightly. Obviously we want to make good commercial creative decisions about the products that we publish, but we also have to recognise the fact that this is a business, and it involves people's lives and mortgages and things like that.

**But the bottom line is you say yes or no.**

At the end of the day, yes. We're going to say "Yes, this is great," and we're going to go into full production, and fully fund the product, or "No, sorry, this is not going to



work out," and suggest that they sell the product to someone else. The middle ground is that occasionally we'll see the spark of something that we really love, but it's in the wrong wrapping, or we'll love the character but the gameplay isn't quite right, and we continue to track it.

**Whenever thirdparty developers talk about developing for the PlayStation they say they're forced to write for a demographic. They have it drummed into them: 18-24, 18-24, 18-24. Is that a mantra?**

No. And in fact, if there's a mantra, it's to create entertainment for everyone. We want to create games that satisfy the hardcore market, and that's why we continue to do games like *Gran Turismo*, *Primal*, *The Getaway*, etc. But if we want to expand the appeal of gaming into ubiquitous entertainment, a ubiquitous platform for interactive entertainment,

**been fighting that battle against the hardcore of the hardcore, who've accused you of doing this dreadful thing - bringing gaming to the masses.**

It's like a band, isn't it? When you're at college or school, and you really love this band who only three people know about, and suddenly they have a number one single, and they become popular and they've sold out, and you're like, "Oh, everyone knows them now..." and they're no longer cool. But you still listen to their music. PlayStation, whether every *Edge* reader agrees with this or not, has had a massive influence on gaming culture. They might not always be positive influences, but it's definitely changed the world of gaming forever. It's made gaming credible, it's made owning, playing and living in a world where gaming is part of someone's entertainment, cool.

Ten years ago, if someone asked me what I did for a living I'd mumble

the ability to entertain themselves. Dolphins do, as well.

**So it's not about games, it's about providing the tools for people to entertain each other.**

I'm not sure it's about tools; more a place to go, a platform for that base level of human interaction to take place.

**Six years ago you had the Yaroze stuff, and within the hardcore - that dot in the dot...**

That molecule on a bit of paper...

**The way you refer to them sounds like they're not important to you.**

No, they're not. It's not... [big sigh] It's not important to... [long pause]. Let me just put this into some kind of context. If you look at the relative size of the business over the last ten years, and how it's grown... Ten years ago, the hardcore

"Ten years ago, if someone asked me what I did for a living I'd mumble something about being in computers. Now I say I work for PlayStation, and people are instantly okay with that"

however you want to describe it, then we need to make games that appeal to old people as well as young people, non-gamers as well as casual gamers, etc. We always roll out these figures that we're in one in three homes in the UK, which is a great achievement. But invert that, and two out of three don't have a PSone or PlayStation2.

**You picked *GT*, *Primal* and *The Getaway* as hardcore games...**

Yeah. Well, they may not be great examples, actually.

**But that's a definition of hardcore that many of *Equip*'s readers would consider mainstream.**

Yeah, I suppose I'd better remember my audience here. *Edge*'s definition of hardcore is a tiny dot on a bit of paper, whereas the massmarket definition of hardcore is a... slightly larger radius.

**With respect to that definition, most of our readers would consider the PS a mainstream gamers platform. You've**

something about being in computers. Now I say I work for PlayStation, and people are instantly okay with that. But computer games ten years ago were something that involved orcs and goblins and strange people spending all night playing games.

**Would you consider this a personal crusade, then?**

I think it's something that's a strong thread in the company. Kind of the DNA of Sony, that it's always been about entertainment for everybody, and accessible technology for everybody, and I think that has come into the SCE view of the world. And, yeah, our goal is to bring games to everybody, or interactive entertainment to everybody, or network entertainment or whatever you want to call it. Games are a great Trojan horse. But there's also something more fundamental than that: human beings interacting with each other for the purpose of entertainment is a strong thread. And I'm not talking about sex, I'm talking about the basic level of interaction - humans are a rare species in that they actually have

probably represented more than 50 per cent of the total business - I'm making these numbers up, just guessing - and five years later, the business has more than trebled in size, and the hardcore has probably not grown at all. The total number of hardcore games has probably not changed massively between ten years ago and today. But there are now over 100,000,000 people around the world with some kind of PlayStation hardware, so that means that one of two things has happened. Either the definition of hardcore has changed, and that people who play more than two hours a day, five days a week might now account for 40 per cent of gaming, or that the real hardcore - the people who think that unless you can get more than 80,000,000 on *Asteroids* you don't deserve to share the oxygen on the planet - the real hardcore has just receded down into this tiny little dot. Either way, the universe of gaming and PlayStation has grown so big now that the hardcore has lost its ability to influence as strongly the direction of the business.









**Yaroze was a big part of wooing them. Sony has the PS2 Linux kit now, but it seems the real hardcore are moving to the Xbox, where there's a huge homebrew community which, essentially, is completely free. Does this bother you?**

No, it doesn't. We were very successful with Net Yaroze in establishing it as an access point for the next layer of people, semi-pro enthusiasts and educational institutions. The Linux kit has replaced it in educational areas, and we've been very successful in getting it out there. But there isn't a business per se in selling semi-professional game dev tools to the consumer base, but I think you'll see a trend over the next couple of years with what we're calling consumer-created contents, where you've got content that's created by the consumer and gifted into the universe of all players. And we're working on a few projects that are built fundamentally on that concept.

**You say there's no business in it. Does everything that you do have to be a business, or are there things you do that are more aspirational?**

I can tell you that we've never ever made any money out of Yaroze or the Linux kits, they're not a profitable part of the business, but they are aspects that are of value to our industry, because one of the challenges I face from a development point of view is getting new talent to join the technical and creative parts of our industry – you know, what I mentioned

of content generating tool, and that once you're online you have the ability to upload the level, the track, the character, the design, for everyone to enjoy. That doesn't necessarily require game development skill, in that you won't be programming at a C++ or vector unit level. But you will be able to create gigabytes of content as a result.

**But what about smaller teams working on smaller games?**

Well, the EyeToy team is a small team. A little bit bigger recently, but the core team's only been about ten people for most of its life. Hardware, too – that's a relatively small team. But generally, no, the amount of content we need to generate in a finite time means we have to employ more people, and that's the way it works.

**Are you a gamer yourself?**

Not as much as I used to be. In terms of game playing until 3am to finish a game.

**Why's that?**

Time. Age. And... probably... erm... when you travel a lot, coming home, having a life outside of work, spending time with my girlfriend – I moved house last year, trying to get the house straightened out – I don't have the time to play a game through like I used to.

**So presumably you believe that playing games all the time isn't much help in assessing what makes a good game.**

**"I think you'll see a trend over the next couple of years with what we're calling consumer-created content, where you've got content that's created by the consumer and gifted to all players"**

before about an access point – and with a closed-off console there's no access point for your semi-professional to get in the industry. I've said this in **Edge** before, that the greatest thing about the C64 was the word 'Ready' and a flashing cursor, that you could just type in and get going.

**Do you think there's an opportunity for a return to small teams again?**

When I talk about customer-created content, I'm talking about the idea that when you buy a game, there's some kind

Yes. I can tell you why I think a game is good, and I know technically a huge amount about what the PlayStation can and can't do. I'm lucky in that I have access to a lot of people within this organisation who can analyse the game down to its nth degree, and then add real value to the product. My role is to guide those people to get the best out of them, rather than doing that job for them.

**Do you play games by competitors?**

Who do you mean?





**Microsoft and Nintendo.**

I played a lot of *Super Monkey Ball*. Played a bit of *Halo*, but I'm not a big firstperson shooter fan. And other than walking around everyone's booths at E3... there's nothing that really grabbed me. A lot of people have been playing *Mario Sunshine*, but it seems people got a bit bored of it after a while. I'm not sure if that's the commonly held view. I mean, it's still brilliant, but it was repeating a lot of things that had been done well in the Nintendo 64 game.

**Do you ever see games on a different platform and think, "Damn, I wish that was ours"?**

There's nothing... [long pause] I think *Super Monkey Ball* is a really well crafted game. Technically it's nicely done, just putting personality to a puzzle game, it was just clever the way they embedded the character inside a semi-transparent sphere. That was good design, good technology, very nicely executed. But I don't think it's a platform maker. You don't look at it and think, "That's going to make hardware sell, that's going to grow the market." It doesn't add anything to the pantheon of games that hasn't been done before in one way, shape or form. There's nothing on Xbox or GameCube that doesn't exist in some form already on PS2. In my humble opinion.

**What will you be showing at E3?**

We're going to be showing something in the region of 50 new products on our stand. I can't tell you what all of those are going to be, but there are going to be some surprises. I think the biggest thing from Europe is EyeToy. We've got online *Destruction Derby*, too, and a new game from the Cambridge Studio, *Ghost Hunter*, which is stunning.

**You've picked out the highlights from Europe. Is there any sort of rivalry between SCEI and SCEI, SCEA?**

No. But I was very intrigued to read about this apparent rivalry in *Edge* recently.

**Really?**

Mmm. It was about four or five months ago and there was some rather acerbic references to the rivalry between the various companies. I don't know where it came from.

**Well, there have been rumours.**

I think there's a *natural* and *healthy* challenge laid down between the developers to create great products, and for those products to be successful in the other markets, but that's just the game – in both senses of the word. But that doesn't manifest itself in a negative way, only in a positive way. We meet about four or five times a year as an executive staff, and between myself and Yoshida in the States and Korita and Yamauchi in Japan we have an excellent working relationship. And more importantly a strategic view of how we're going to grow the business. It all goes via Akira Sato who looks at the software business as a global enterprise, and how we're going to go about creating these global, multimillion dollar hits, because that's how we make money.

**Does each branch have a personality, a speciality?**

I think Japan has pioneered the firstparty challenge of making games that grow the market earlier than we have in Europe, and perhaps the US – we're all catching up now. The US has a long tradition of doing the sports games, which is part of its make up. The US now, though, is definitely a pioneer in online with *SOCOM*, and the other online games that it's doing. And I guess that Europe's personality is established pretty well now by *The Getaway*, *Rally*, *Formula 1*, and *Primal*. I think that EyeToy will help our personality a bit as well.

**Frequency and Ico both did well critically, and anyone who loves games would say that they're wonderful experiences, but neither was a commercial success. Is there a space for more games like that on the PS2?**

Oh, certainly. When I talk about a game being a platform mover, it doesn't need to sell very many software units in order for it to have a positive influence on the perception of a platform. People buy a console in order to play software. They don't buy a PS2, a GameCube, an Xbox because they look nice – they are buying it as an enabling device for a piece of software. And if the few hundred thousand people that bought *Frequency* or *Ico* bought a PlayStation2 for that piece of software, then that's just as important in their mind as *GT*, *The Getaway*, *Vice*



*City*, etc. You don't have to be a multimillion seller in order to be important.

**So how important are games such as *Ico*, *Rez*, *Frequency* to gaming?**

I think they play two roles. Everybody that I know who has bought *Rez* or *Ico* or *Frequency* loves the product. They are total advocates – once they have bought it they love it – and in fact, someone was telling me the other day that *Frequency* and *Fantavision* are fetching quite high prices for second-hand copies of the game. But everyone loves them, so they clearly play a positive role in the satisfaction that people get from the machine. If you bought lots of titles and

**Do you think that might have harmed your reputation?**

Well, I don't know whether we had one to start with. Remember that when PlayStation started in '94 in Japan, '95 here, we didn't have a reputation for firstparty content creation that Nintendo or Sega had, that went back ten, 20 years. So I think in the seven years since then we've formed an incredibly successful and highly talented firstparty publishing business around the world, and created best-selling games in every market. And with things like *Crash*, 25 million copies sold, *GT*, over 20 million... we've created some of the worlds most loved pieces of software.

our catalogue for every year, we have some very adventurous things like *EyeToy*, some sequels that are very profitable but not so revolutionary, and then some big risks. Internally we use this thing of being first or being best as our benchmark for games. That's what we always try and be – you either be first in the genre, you create a new market, or you be the best. There's no point in being the fourth-best driving game on PS2.

**The driving game market is oversubscribed, and so is the football game genre. And not many people would say that Sony's in-house football game is number one in its field.**

“I think a game like *Ico* can play an incredibly important role in inspiring other designers to do better things, even if the game they're basing it on didn't sell. There are parallels in Hollywood”

didn't enjoy many of them you wouldn't become an advocate of gaming to non-gamers. But there are people who buy *Frequency* who probably introduce a whole sphere of their friends to gaming through music, people who wouldn't normally have considered gaming as an access to entertainment.

The second thing is within the industry. *Ico* has been well regarded within the industry for its beautiful character design and level design and pacing, and it's critically and creatively acclaimed for good reason. And I think a game like *Ico* can play an incredibly important role in inspiring other developers to do better things, even if the game that they're basing it on didn't sell. There are many parallels in Hollywood where you'll see a remake of an obscure film that goes on to be a blockbuster.

**Why so many firstparty titles now?**

The total number of firstparty titles is actually decreasing. But the quality of them is increasing, and I think that's why our firstparty titles are starting to get a higher profile. SCEE used to publish lots and lots of games on PSone that were not always successful.

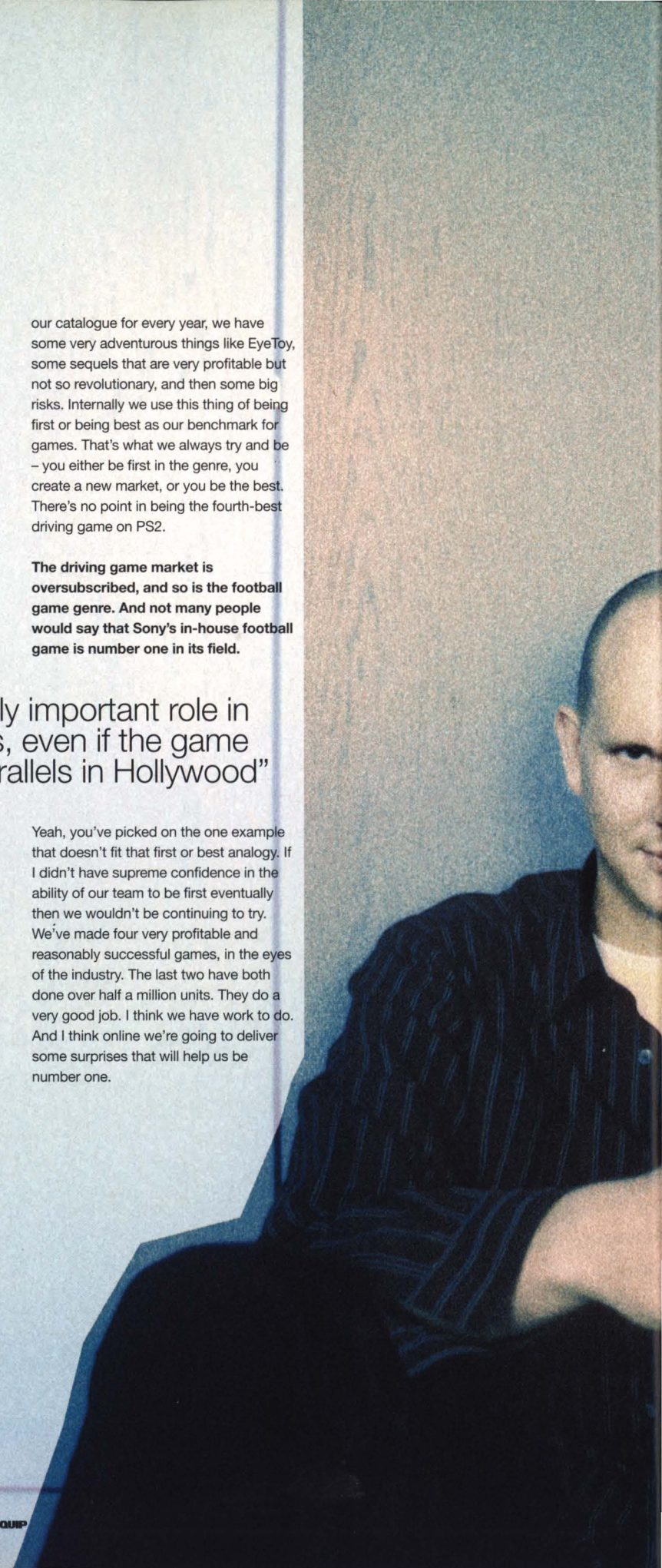
**If you could produce a game, right now, and have it be either commercially successful or to move videogaming on as a form, what would it be?**

Are you asking me as a creative question as a commercial question?

**It's a different answer either way. We're asking you.**

I think that you can't separate the two. If you're asking me as a software creator then my wish would be to leave a legacy. I think that any creative wants to do that – whether it's recognised six months, six years, 60 years from now, I think you want to create something that has a lasting impact on the universal world order of games – or music or books or whatever. But also I have to be honest and say we've got a business to run, and we have to deliver profit for our shareholders, and we have to continue to push gaming and grow PS2 into new areas, new markets, new demographics, and so we've got to do both at the same time. That's why, in

Yeah, you've picked on the one example that doesn't fit that first or best analogy. If I didn't have supreme confidence in the ability of our team to be first eventually then we wouldn't be continuing to try. We've made four very profitable and reasonably successful games, in the eyes of the industry. The last two have both done over half a million units. They do a very good job. I think we have work to do. And I think online we're going to deliver some surprises that will help us be number one.





**Jason Rubin is concerned about the leap from PS2 to PS3 not being significant enough for the average Joe. Agree?**

I've had this conversation with Jason, and I think what he means is that graphics alone is not the biggest shift. Moving from 16bit to PSone was a significant change – 2D to 3D provided an opportunity to create games that had never been in 3D before, and that was a reason to purchase. The move from PSone to PS2 was an evolution of that process, but added things on the CPU side that enabled things that weren't possible before – a bit floating point capability within the chipset allowed you to do real physics, real collisions, real autonomous behaviour, and that added a lot to gaming.

Whatever happens next, graphics will become a commodity. The endless march of technology means that polygons will become just a meaninglessly large number – although people will still come up against some limitations, that's the nature of any system. But I think that what will happen in the future is the community of gamers working together will create the 4D game, the fourth dimension being online.

**So online gaming is the next big step.**

I think it's the biggest step our industry has made since its inception. Since Atari and Nintendo and C64 and 8bit, the business from there to now hasn't changed. It's about putting content on a device, be it a cassette, a disk, a CD, a cartridge, and distributing that to consumers through the shops. I think that the change that will happen over the next five years will totally collapse that model,

and create new ways of delivering that model to people's phones, cars, offices, that does away with that old model.

**And presumably you're making preparations to deal with that shift.**

Well, obviously. That's what we're trying to do with the Cell technology that we're inventing right now with IBM and Toshiba, and I can't go into the details but we've publicly stated what our intentions are in that arena.

**Microsoft has got the march on you with Xbox Live. Your priority is to be first or best, but it seems you're not going to be first.**

No, that's not true. We launched *Final Fantasy XI* in Japan about a year ago, we've had online gaming running in the US since August last year.

**But you're Sony Europe.**

Uhm. There have been... trials... running for many months now. No, we're certainly not... I have to take some issue with your expression that Microsoft has stolen a march on us. That's not really fair.

**Okay, but its Network Adapter is built into the console. To get online with an Xbox you don't have to do anything other than get a subscription. To get online with the PS2 you have to buy a modem. And console add-ons traditionally don't sell.**

Yeah... I think that that is... true, if you're talking about just a peripheral. But most of those add-ons, if you're talking about 32X or Sega-CD or whatever, they didn't change the way the consumer saw the console dramatically. They might have got nicer graphics, or a bit faster, or whatever, but they were ultimately the same experience. What the Network Adapter delivers is a whole new playing experience that consumers will definitely value.

**That's your fight, then. To persuade users that this is special.**

Mmm, yeah. And it's not something that we believe will be like turning on a light bulb. It's not going to become ubiquitous overnight. Much of it's down to the infrastructure, and much of it's down to content. I think that consumers will get online, but it's not going to be everyone tomorrow. Which is fine.

**And presumably this is also about building confidence in the next generation of hardware.**

This is not a sprint. This is a marathon.

**That's the online side of things. You also mentioned mobile devices. Nintendo is the market leader there; is its dominance important to Sony?**

Nintendo has, ever since Game & Watch, defined the market for portable gaming, both in terms of form, factor, price point, battery life, value, the whole thing has been very well established by Nintendo and it should be very proud of what it's done. Like I said earlier there's no sense in us entering that business unless we feel we can offer something new and better, and we haven't entered that business, because we can't better what's already there. No point in being another Neo-Geo Pocket or Wonderswan.

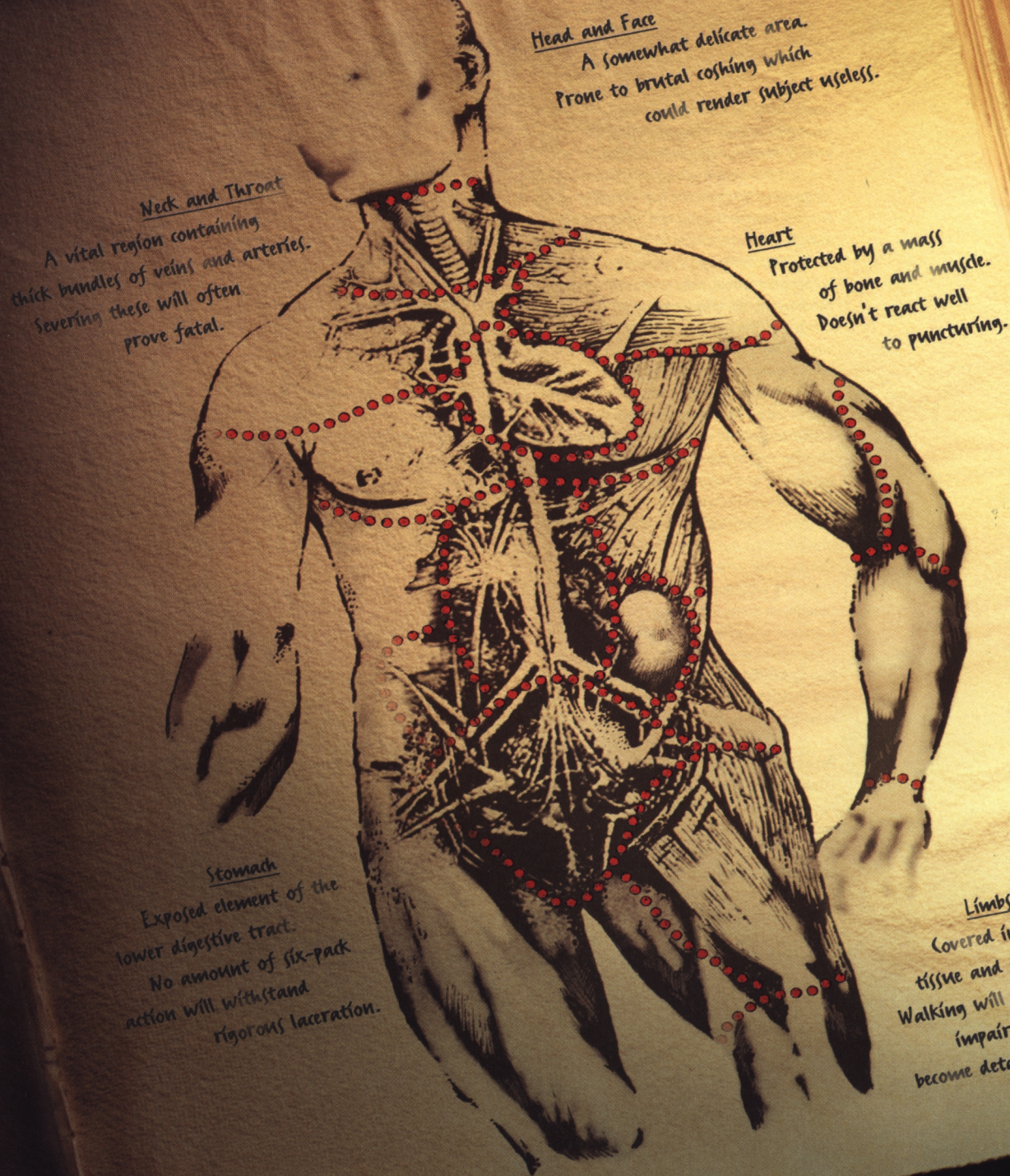
**You mentioned mobile phone gaming, though.**

Yeah, that might be more of an IP or brand migration rather than a technology migration. There are lots of people who view our IP as valuable and useful in mobile gaming, and making a joint venture with those people to bring those experiences to other devices isn't necessarily putting a Sony chipset in a phone. That might not happen.

**So, if you're sticking to consoles for now, when will Sony come up with the ultimate single format that will render every competitor redundant?**

I think we already have.





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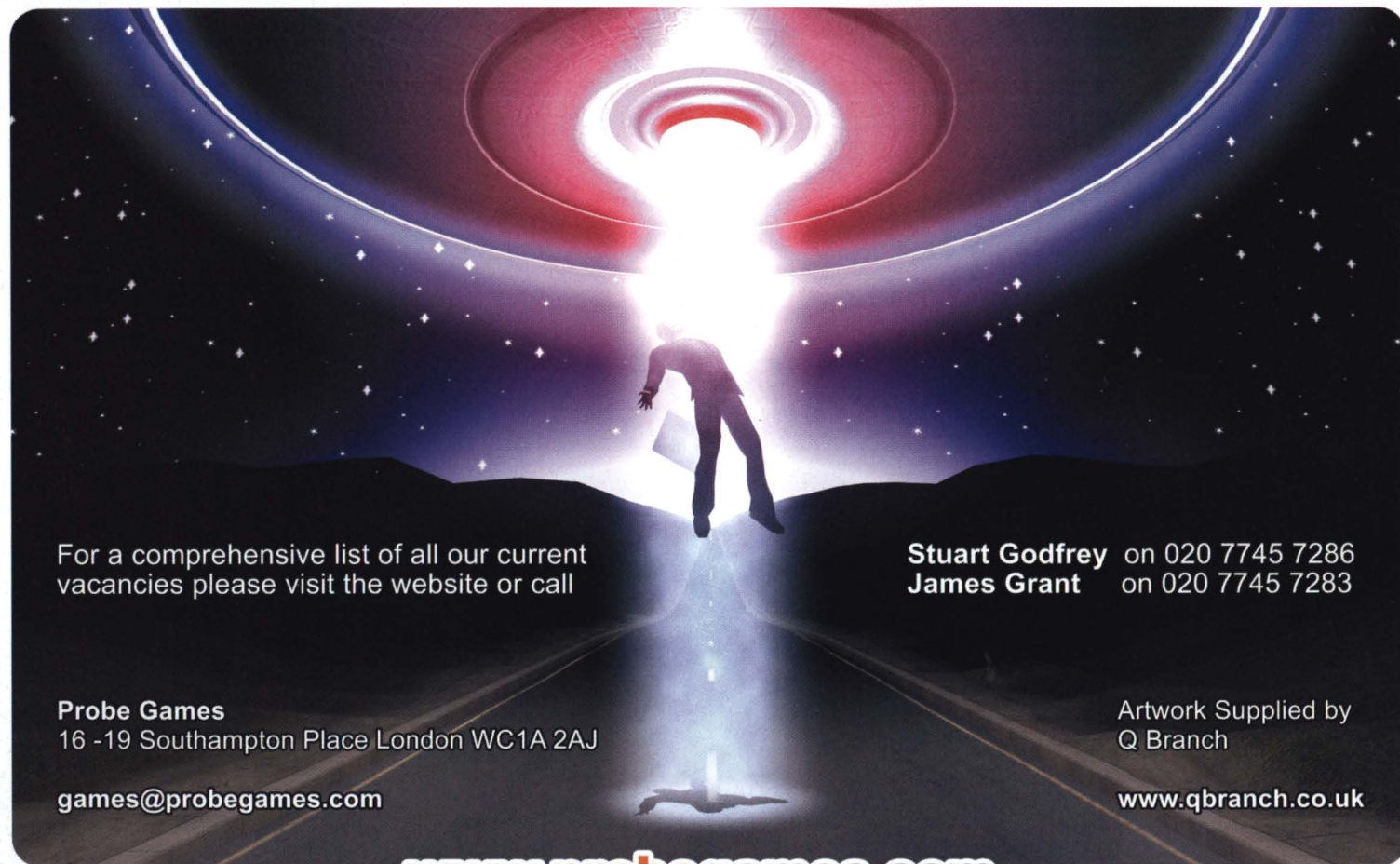
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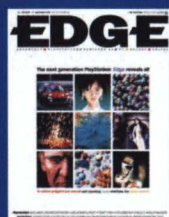
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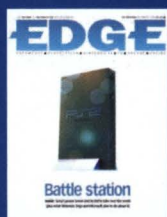
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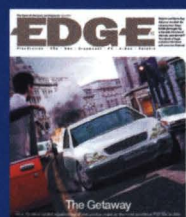
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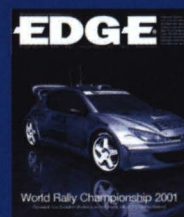
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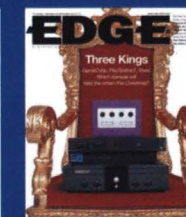
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# PS2 Top Ten

Thousands of games will be released on PS2 throughout its lifetime. **Equip** previews the highlights from the near future

**B**ecause it's the most popular format with consumers, PlayStation2 is obviously the hardware of choice for developers across the globe looking to take their own particular brands of entertainment to as many eyeballs as possible. This results in a vast and diverse software catalogue – and, inevitably, an awful lot of dross. In this section **Equip** has sought to identify ten of the titles that sit at the other end of the scale. It's a selection of games that, if pulled off successfully, will in some way at least refine electronic entertainment. Some may even redefine it.

Their goals are manifold. *Jak & Daxter 2*, for instance, aims to take the character action genre to its next level by

introducing darker themes and, crucially, gameplay that does not simply require you to collect 100 shiny stars in order to make any progress. *Enter The Matrix*, meanwhile, will mark the beginning of an explosive new era for Hollywood's relationship with gaming which could change the way visual entertainment is made. And *Silent Hill 3* simply takes everything dark that's ever entered your nightmares, twists it and bends it and makes it darker to the power of ten, then coughs it back up in an effort to mess with your head like nothing else, ever.

Then there's *Cy Girls*. And how could we not include a game featuring heroines as cute as those who feature in Konami's game? **E**



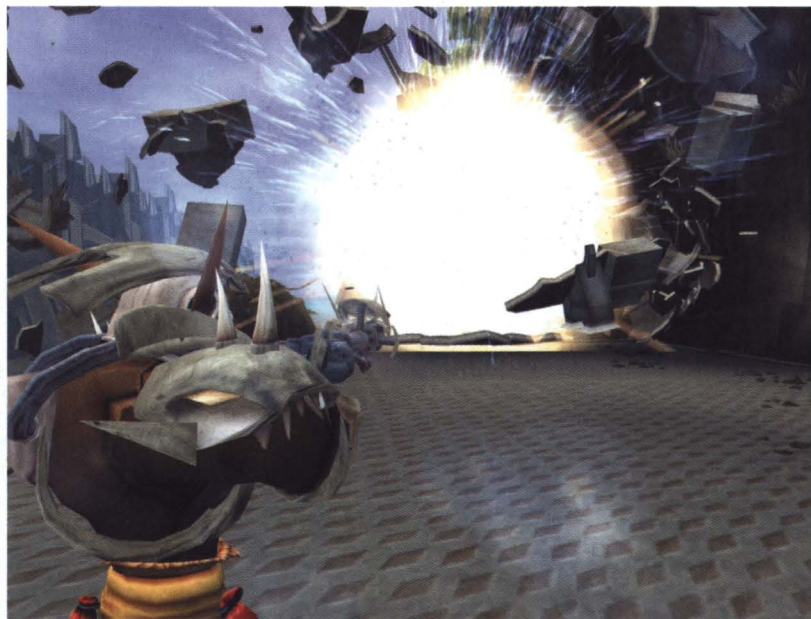
- 042 Jak & Daxter 2
- 046 Enter The Matrix
- 050 Driver 3
- 054 Silent Hill 3
- 058 Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness
- 062 Onimusha 3
- 064 Project BG&E
- 066 Resident Evil Online
- 067 Cy Girls
- 067 SOCOM: US Navy SEALs



# Jak & Daxter 2

Sony's flagship odd couple are set to return, but this sequel is set in a much darker place than the Day-Glo universe of the original

Publisher: SCEE ■ Developer: Naughty Dog ■ Release: December

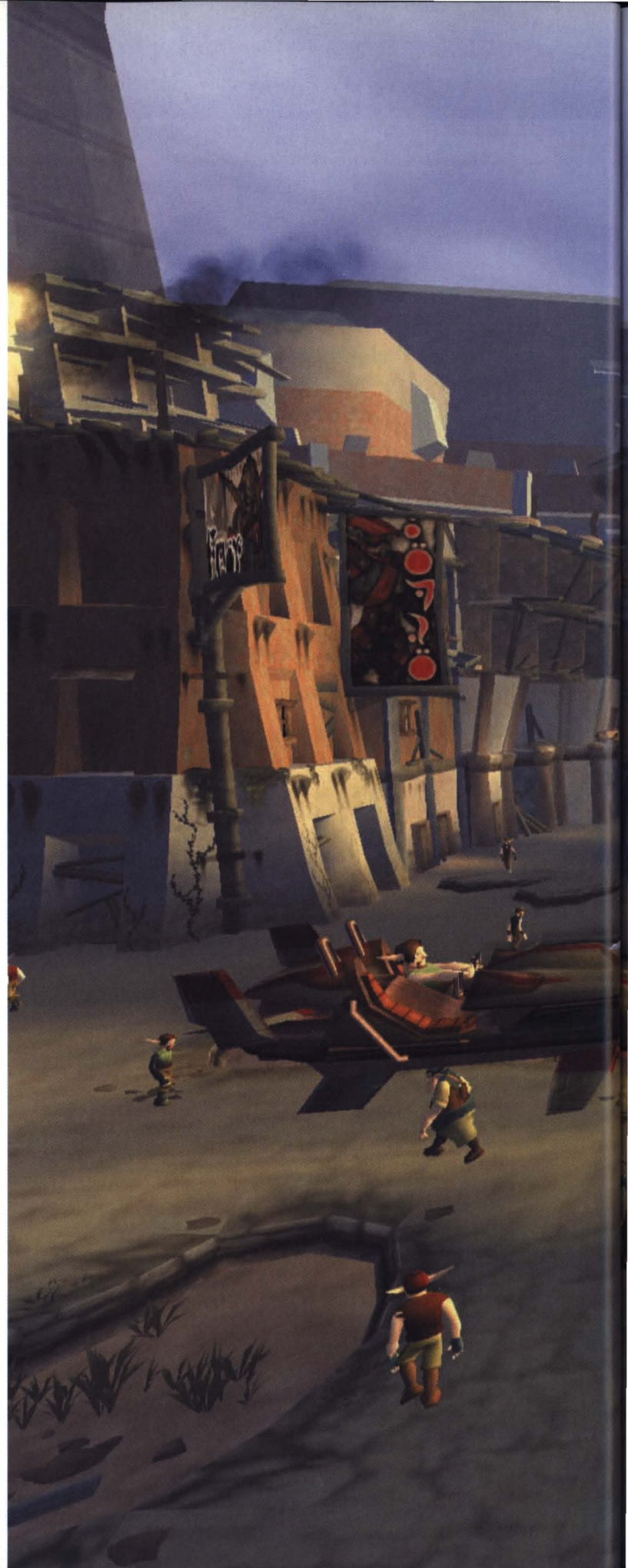


Naughty Dog claims that its new 3D engine is a significant improvement over the original game's – which was something of a lesson in realtime rendering in its own right. Once again, load times will be notable by their absence

**N**aughty Dog is refusing to rest on its laurels. Despite a warm reception for the original *Jak & Daxter*, the development studio is determined – almost aggressively so – to make plain the many significant changes for the sequel. In the process it's almost dismissive of the original game, which is harsh by any sane standards but, at the same time, encouraging. Many titles would benefit from such an unsentimental critical blowtorching once the clock ticks sequel, but it rarely happens – especially when the title in question is widely acknowledged as an excellent one.

Changes, then. Don't use the word cute. The colourful and confidently stylised imagery of the original worked well, but seems to rankle the developer now. It's perhaps an admission that the post-GTA/// gaming world is a much darker, more mature one that these lands are far moodier places, both in imagery and

Continued >











The game has a darker tone this time around, although its characters retain a distinctly cartoony look and feel, with elfin ears and goofy expressions being the order of the day. An hour's worth of cut scenes will spell out the plot, which will very clearly drive the platform action







location. Verdant grass-scapes are replaced with sewers, bleak strip mines, mountains, towers, hunkering forests and graveyards of ships slumped on the ocean floor. What's more, a third of the game occurs in a large, convoluted city, bringing a claustrophobic urban feel despite the city actually being 24 times larger than the biggest single area (the Zoomer level) in the original. An improved game engine, dubbed 2.0, brings greater scenery detail and spicy new surface effects, plus a fourfold increase in the characters' polygon counts.

the true nature of the mysterious white light at the end of the first game, starting from the point it left off.

So, like Bill Hicks' version of Jesus, Jak's back, but he's pissed off. It would ill suit the bleaker mood if he were to spend the time collecting orbs and freeing boxed scout flies, then, and item collection has been downgraded from driving force to sideline. The goal is now the completion of tasks, each one integrated into the narrative and vital to its gradual unfolding. No task stands alone or springs from a random meeting, as before. The player

## A prologue reveals the true nature of the mysterious white light at the end of the first game, starting from the point it left off

Don't think the changes are limited merely to the cosmetic realm, though. Jak himself is a long way from the cheerful chappie he was before, as he seeks a cathartic – but, as always, morally dubious – revenge. Imprisonment has embittered him, and the poor boy's had more than just fumbled soap and hairy-shouldered men called Cathy to worry about. He's been experimented on. And not by Cathy. Whereas before Jak fought the effects of the Dark Eco, he now embraces them, acquiring 'dark' abilities as he progresses. The additional fact that bellicose legions of 'metal heads' need dispatching (robots, it's assumed, rather than silently asocial teenagers in faded Iron Maiden T-shirts) also hints at a more concerted style to the previously rather simplistic combat.

Darker still? In the course of Jak's quest more than one of the 20 additional characters is killed, further removing the game from the 'baby brother' swirl of the games continuum. As for crossover, Jak, Daxter, Samos and Kiera make repeat appearances, although we're promised significant changes even here, and at least one other character will occasionally become playable. A prologue also reveals

must perform such operations as restoring water to drought-hit parts of the city, moving supplies for a shady resistance movement and opening entrances with explosives, and each such event is topped and tailed with story. How this is tailored to fit the inevitable cycle of failure and replay remains to be seen, as it's easy to lose immediacy and continuity when dealing with cut scenes and repetition.

It's encouraging though that in all other respects the game is trying to increase the player's freedom. Once you've acquired an item it's then with you for the rest of the game, rather than powerful items being confined to specific areas, or taken away when it suits the developer. This will have quite an effect on the use of vehicles, of which there are around twelve. A new rigid-body physics engine lets multiple machines interact with each other and augments the excellently balanced dynamics of the original, and the Zoomer, a highlight for many in the original, returns in spirit if not substance.

And if the game as a whole can pull off that trick – returning with new substance and the same spirit – it can hardly fail.



The series' fantasy leanings appear to be accompanied by charismatic sci-fi stylings this time around





# Enter The Matrix

Turning a sci-fi flick such as 'The Matrix' into a game ranks as a ridiculous challenge. Buy Shiny may just about pull it off...

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Shiny Entertainment ■ Release: May



Shiny reckons that each character can use around 3,000 moves, though many will be shared. Enemies range from standard police grunts to agents who'll relentlessly track both Ghost and Niobhe through the 'Matrix' universe

**W**hen 'The Matrix' was released in 1998 it was as if the world's filmgoers swallowed a red pill and one of the most extravagant premises in film history. Think of a pretentious sixth-form philosophy essay mixed with David Brent's musings on the does-the-fridge-light-ever-go-off conundrum and you'll be somewhere close to the backstory that fuels *Enter The Matrix*. Thankfully, the film was always about style over substance and, from the evidence of **Equip**'s playtest, so is the game.

It's all about the combat. Capturing those beautifully choreographed set-pieces on PS2 was key to Shiny and six months were spent in the motion-capture hangar alone. It's heartening to see that the Wachowski brothers are as serious about the quality of the game as they are the films. The upshot is a title that develops a major subplot of the film – centring on Ghost and Niobhe – and contains one

Continued >

EQUIP





enter the matrix





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The Wachowski brothers storyboarded all of the game before handing their vision over to Shiny for implementation. The build played by **Equip** was still some way off completion, the siblings reputed to be working on new camera angles



hour of additional DVD footage. *Enter The Matrix* represents the first genuine cross-fertilisation of film and videogame.

In truth the combat is not completely intact yet: the camera sometimes fails to centre behind your character fast enough to keep up with the action and occasionally the connections between the limbs of the sparring combatants appears slightly awry. Still, this is some of the most exciting-looking thirdperson combat you'll have ever seen. It contains more moves than you'd find in your average wrestling game but every twist of the arm, throw or

button. Walking up and along walls, backflipping over opponents, knocking chunks out of concrete pillars and just generally showboating are all emphasised by this ability. It helps with accuracy and, well, it just looks cool.

The game also contains a driving and a piloting section. The latter is still under wraps but the first is an A-to-B race through city traffic that is showing signs of being less enthralling than the main adventure. However, it may be saved by a feature that sees one character drive while the other shoots out of the window (this is



## The Wachowski brothers' signature excess has been convincingly captured. Weapons are acquired then discarded when exhausted

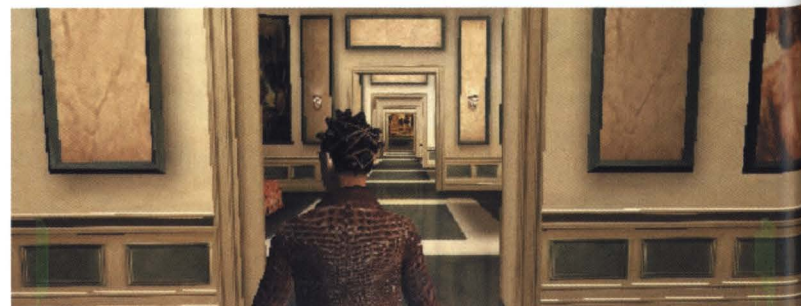
leg sweep is executed with impressive speed and fluidity. The input is simple, with the four face buttons taking care of punches, kicks, jumps and a block/disarm command. Combos can be built up as skills are learned and Shiny reckons each character has around 3,000 moves. It's another piece of hype, of course, but the context-sensitive system delivers a fun and potentially deep experience.

Crucially, the Wachowski brothers' signature excess and flamboyance has been convincingly captured. As in the films, weapons are acquired then discarded as soon as clips are exhausted. Attacks that link a series of throws and punches with a disarm command are devastating. It's entirely possible to discharge two Uzi clips into one opponent while cork-screwing through the air, land, throw away the guns, leg sweep another enemy to the ground, disarm him, fire a bullet in his face, then calmly leave the room with a smug sense of superiority. *Enter The Matrix* is that sort of game.

Of course, you can expect a number of visual effects to further dramatise the action. Bullet time, or 'Focus' as it's called by Shiny, is triggered by pressing the L1

automated depending on which character you are playing). 'Hacking' will also feature in the game in the form of a simple text adventure-style interface that allows you to change and develop your character's bio on the memory card.

While *Enter the Matrix* doesn't offer the kind of sandbox world delivered by *GTA: Vice City*, it's remarkable enough to get the school playgrounds of the world buzzing. The structure may be linear, but the muscular engine that drives the combat is far ahead of most similarly styled code on PlayStation2. It also proves that the machine still has tricks up its sleeve as it approaches middle age.



Much of the 'Matrix' universe has been replicated for use in the game – and accurately. Stray bullets will deform scenery and Shiny promises that trigger-happy gamers will be able to reduce concrete pillars to apple cores





## INTERVIEW: SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

Equip spoke to Shiny president **David Perry** about going to the movies...

### How is *Enter the Matrix* pushing the technical capabilities of the PS2?

When we started the project, I joked around with the programmers saying I wanted detail down to the saliva on the lips of the characters. Two years later, I am casually told, "Oh yeah, check out the lips." Not only do they reflect the light in the room but so do the fingernails on their hands. I guess the most difficult part would be Trinity: how the heck would we make her reflective plastic clothing look real? They solved that also, and it's really attention grabbing to see the way light moves on it. Finally, what about the bullets? As they fly through the air, leaving trails if you move the camera in, you will see they also reflect the light; we are very happy with the way this stuff turned out. When the directors of the cult movie say to you, "Dave, we're planning the most advanced motion capture ever done for anything, period. Would you like to use our equipment?" "Erm, yes." Then suddenly the opportunity to do something really cutting edge is given to us also. Just how big was the capture field? Well, I reckon I could have parked a commercial airplane in it.

### It is hard to think of any game that has done free-roaming thirdperson combat well. How did you approach this aspect of the game and what design problems did it throw up?

The two extremes are *Tekken* style (technical) or *Double Dragon* style (punch, punch, punch). We didn't want either for this game. The Wachowski vision was clear: you enter a room, if somebody tries to stop you, you close the distance in a spectacular way while dodging their bullets, you take their gun off them or turn it against them and then you take them down hard and fast. In *Enter The Matrix*, you are as hard as nails. You attack more than you defend and you don't fire two bullets, you empty clips and toss weapons wherever you go.

### Can you give any examples of how players can use the 'Focus' ability to overcome challenges and defeat opponents?

We call it 'Focus' as it was clear in 'The Matrix' that everything is mind over matter. With a focused mind, the player can achieve the impossible. By pressing the Focus button, your abilities instantly double and everything becomes more spectacular. If I press Focus and jump towards an enemy, I will cartwheel towards them. Holding it down I can then dominate them with the amazing moves that Master Wo Ping (the choreographer from 'The Matrix' films) managed to get his stunt people to do for the game. Many of the Focus moves required special rigs or wires to make them possible, but to be clear: no expense was spared to bring his moves under your control.

### How does Shiny's relationship with the Wachowski brothers work in practice? Do you have any creative input into the game, and have there been any major disagreements?

I think the reason the Wachowskis chose Shiny is that they could see we were not out to make some really funky 'Matrix' game. We loved the 'Matrix' universe the way they had built it. At no time has there been any argument over the game as they are gamers and it's not like we need to explain anything to them. So they play, we talk, they have ideas of new things they want to add, we put them in and I think they will surprise the heck out of the gamers with some of the things they have put in.

### The cross-fertilisation of *The Matrix* videogame and film is unique, but has this caused any difficulties? For instance, the game necessarily has to stick rigidly to a linear plot and structure.

That was our big surprise when we started. The Wachowski brothers decided from the start, instead of following an old story or just following the next film, they would write a parallel story and have everyone shoot that new story along with the current film. They also had planned the way the game and movie would intertwine. The movie changes the game and the game changes the movie. This is even more unique. It's like George Lucas writing and directing a new 'Star Wars' movie and having all his best people work on the film - then it turns out it was just for the videogame. I could not believe they would find the time to do this, but they did.

### How does 'hacking' work?

You can hack into your console (or PC). You can do things like make sound, eject your CD tray, vibrate your joypad and stuff like that. Quite novel, until you discover the rabbit hole starts to get deeper and you discover huge directories of rebel files and you find virtual drives. Trinity helps and gives you hacking tools that open up ports on your computer system, you find codes on the World Wide Web, etc. It's really quite a surprise to people as it was supposed to just be unique way to hide our cheat codes, but quite frankly I have never seen such an elaborate way to do it. And, yes, you can hack the RAM cartridge bio of your character.



The combat input is very simple, but the moves will alter dramatically depending on the context. Throws, scissor kicks, backflip kicks, leg sweeps and disarm moves are performed with a distinctive fluidity. Factor in the 'focus' ability and you have the makings of a very comprehensive fighting system. The piloting scenes (left) are something of an unknown quantity, though





# Driver 3

*Driver* was the darling of the pre-GTAAA era for action on the streets, and then *Driver 2* spoiled the party. Number three may make amends...

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Reflections ■ Release: TBA



The locations are currently looking a bit sparse but expect plenty of destructible objects, such as crates, to be strategically placed around the streets. The movie editor mode will return so you can capture all the best action

**M**artin Edmondson, managing and development director of Reflections, is a serious-minded guy. He doesn't mince his words and rarely cracks into a smile. But ask him about his passion for all things vehicular and a spark flickers in his eyes. You see, Edmondson didn't just play with toy cars like any other kid, he'd dismantle them, build his own destruction derby arenas, even fashion body panels out of tinfoil so impacts could register with a greater dramatic effect. In a way *Driver 3* has been in development since Edmondson was eight years old.

Yet the game is set to have a tough time. While the original *Driver* distilled the best chase sequences Hollywood had to offer into a thoroughly enjoyable experience – and arguably has still to be matched for sheer knockabout fun – the sequel failed to live up to the hype. Poor framerates and clumsy thirdperson elements shifted the series backwards

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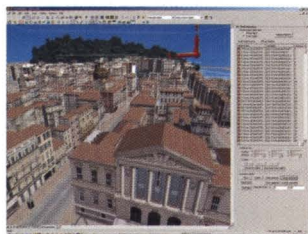


driver 3

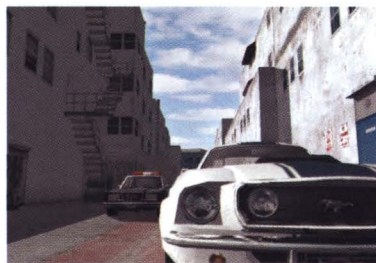




A branching narrative was used in *Driver* but dumped because too many players never went back to explore all the hard work. Tanner's story will be strictly linear in *Driver 3*, taking in Istanbul and Miami



*Stuntman* has aided Reflections in the making of *Driver 3* a good deal. The team is hoping to generate convincing working cities with sophisticated AI routines



Due to the wilfully destructive nature of the game Edmondson will not be including licensed vehicles. Instead the focus will be on facsimiles of US muscle cars, so expect lots of engine grunt and screeching tyres. But don't expect *Driver 3* until well into 2004

rather than forwards. And since then, competition from a slew of similar city-based driving games has given *Driver 3* much to contend with.

Edmondson is vocal on this point: "We are determined to stay true to the original theme of *Driver* which had the most realistic movie-style car chases seen in a game. This is what is driving our efforts on the car handling, damage and general physics areas of the code. *Driver 2* did struggle on PSone and that affected framerate, which in turn meant that simply driving around the streets was actually more fun in the first game. This is something we are well aware of."

Already the damage and physics model of key vehicles is up and running. All body panels can be pummelled and dented to an impressive level of detail. Bumpers scrape along the ground, then drop to the pavement with an authentic clang. Debris doesn't disappear but retains its presence in the world. Discarded doors and bumpers can be propelled forward or



crumpled under tyres. Cosmetic fun, but it shows the lengths to which Edmondson will stretch to achieve his Hollywood ideal.

Sometimes fans want sequels to deliver more options, more levels and more features, but with *Driver 3* there's a sense that if just gets that old tyre-screeching chutzpah back, it'll be better for it. With this in mind, the team has been using its experience with *Stuntman* to maximise the game's performance on PS2.

Like many other developers, Reflections is beginning to think smarter about how to lighten the load on the CPU. Memory saved from generating shadows on the fly on VU1, for instance, has been redirected to creating *Driver 3*'s living, breathing cities. It's here where Reflections hopes *Driver 3* will excel. Although not currently in evidence, the ambition is to build a world that operates independently of the player's actions, featuring pedestrians who stop and have coffee at cafes, civilians that only cross roads when the walk light is on and vehicles that observe

(and hopefully sometimes don't observe) the Highway Code. Edmondson predicts that the player will still be noticing new civilian behaviour after many hours of play.

Approximately 70 per cent of the game will involve 'Bullitt'-inspired car chases, the rest will place the player on foot. The most noticeable addition to *Driver 3* is the inclusion of guns. Edmondson wants the shootouts to be as dramatic as the chase sequences and he even hints that Tanner will be able to swim.

While **Equip** is positive that Reflections can get the driving spot on, doubts remain over these thirdperson aspects, which have traditionally been implemented poorly in such games. More of a tech demo than a playable game, *Driver 3* is still capable of generating excitement. The game's cities include Nice, Istanbul and Miami and if nothing else, Reflections' determination to recapture the magic of the original *Driver* is reassuring. It is clear that Edmondson is not out to make a *GTAIII* clone, and for that, **Equip** is thankful.





## INTERVIEW: REFLECTIONS

Equip spoke to Reflections boss **Martin Edmondson** about reinventing *Driver*...

**Has *Stuntman* helped with *Driver 3*? What technology do the games share?**  
Absolutely. *Stuntman* was a very useful learning process, and certainly we couldn't have produced the *Driver* sequel we wanted without spending a lot of time learning about the machine throughout the development of *Stuntman*. The most obvious sharing of technology between the two will be the physics engine, although it has been advanced considerably since *Stuntman*. Other aspects taken over and further enhanced are the realtime shadows and self-shadowing technology. Geometry is tailored to suit the type of model it represents, instead of trying to force them all into slight variations on one format. We can use the data-unpacking features of VIF, and the programmability of VU1 to do this. Each geometry type gets its own VU routine.

**People have complained that the out-of-car sections, both in *Driver 2* and *The Getaway*, have been cumbersome and a little clumsy. How are you ensuring that the thirdperson aspects in *Driver 3* are as polished as the driving?**

In *Driver 3* you spend more time out of the car than *Driver 2* so we are spending much more time on it. Previously Tanner could only swap cars and flick a few switches so it wasn't a major focus, but he carries a gun in the third instalment, and building interiors feature heavily. Since we have more experience in car-based action than character action this involved playing a number of thirdperson character-based games to work out which felt the most natural, and trying to learn from the mistakes of others.

**Are you constantly refining the handling model in your games, or does there come a point when you have achieved the 'best fit' for the type of driving game you are developing?**

We haven't really refined it in terms of feel, in fact we were very happy with the handling feel of the first *Driver* game. We do however have a completely new handling dynamics system for *Driver 3* so this has been tuned to give the feel of *Driver* but allows far more advanced physics such as the tumbling and damage levels seen in *Stuntman*. In fact we are going to considerable lengths to maintain the feel even down to overlaying the cars from the different handling models to track their response.

**The mini-games have been very popular with *Driver* fans. What kind of mini-games can we expect in *Driver 3*? Will there be a free-driving option?**

Yes, the 'Take a Ride' mode first seen in *Driver* will be in there, together with a selection of driving games. I don't want to say too much about it at this early stage but the 'survival' game will be in there.

**Specifically, what are you doing to create the impression of a working cities?**

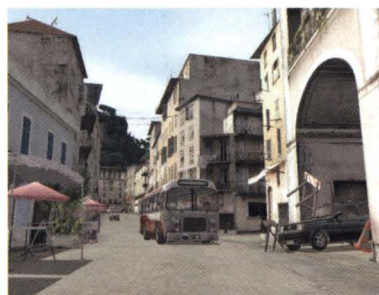
One of the original features of *Driver* was the fact that you could just park your car up in 'Take a Ride' and watch the world go by. *Driver 3* features a much more powerful combination of scripting and AI for the pedestrians and civilians to allow us to push this much further. For the first time in a *Driver* game the personalities of the civilians is carried over into the way they drive.

**What kind of missions can players expect? There's been talk of missions with multiple entrances/goals.**

The missions are less linear than *Driver 2* in that there are multiple strategies often available. We have tried not to spell them out but allow the player to tackle them in different ways. Just one example is a mission in which an empty articulated truck is heading for a compound to load up with stolen cars. You need to steal the cars yourself so you chase the truck. If you follow the truck into the compound you're met by considerable opposition (and a gun battle) but you can still take out all the guards and the truck driver then load up and drive off. If you are quicker, however, you steal the truck and drive to the compound yourself. Since the guards in the compound don't know what the driver looks like you load up the cars and drive off without opposition.

**Finally, *GTAIII* and its sequel *Vice City* shook up the industry. What do you think to Rockstar's achievement and have these games inspired you?**

It's a very well designed and entertaining game so it thoroughly deserves its success. I think *Driver* and *GTA* have a different focus, though. *Driver* was always about the most realistic simulation of a TV/movie car chase. I don't think you could ever call *GTAIII* or *Vice City* a car-chase simulation; they focus on other things.



Noticeably, all the screenshots released so far depict the game's driving elements. The thirdperson sections, however, are bound to be more demanding and will include car changes and shootouts. Approximately 30 per cent of the game will be spent on foot, so it's vital that Reflections makes these sections workable



# Silent Hill 3

A new instalment of the most twisted horror videogame series ever conceived is lurching around the corner. And it's even nastier...

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: In-house (Team Silent) ■ Release: May 23

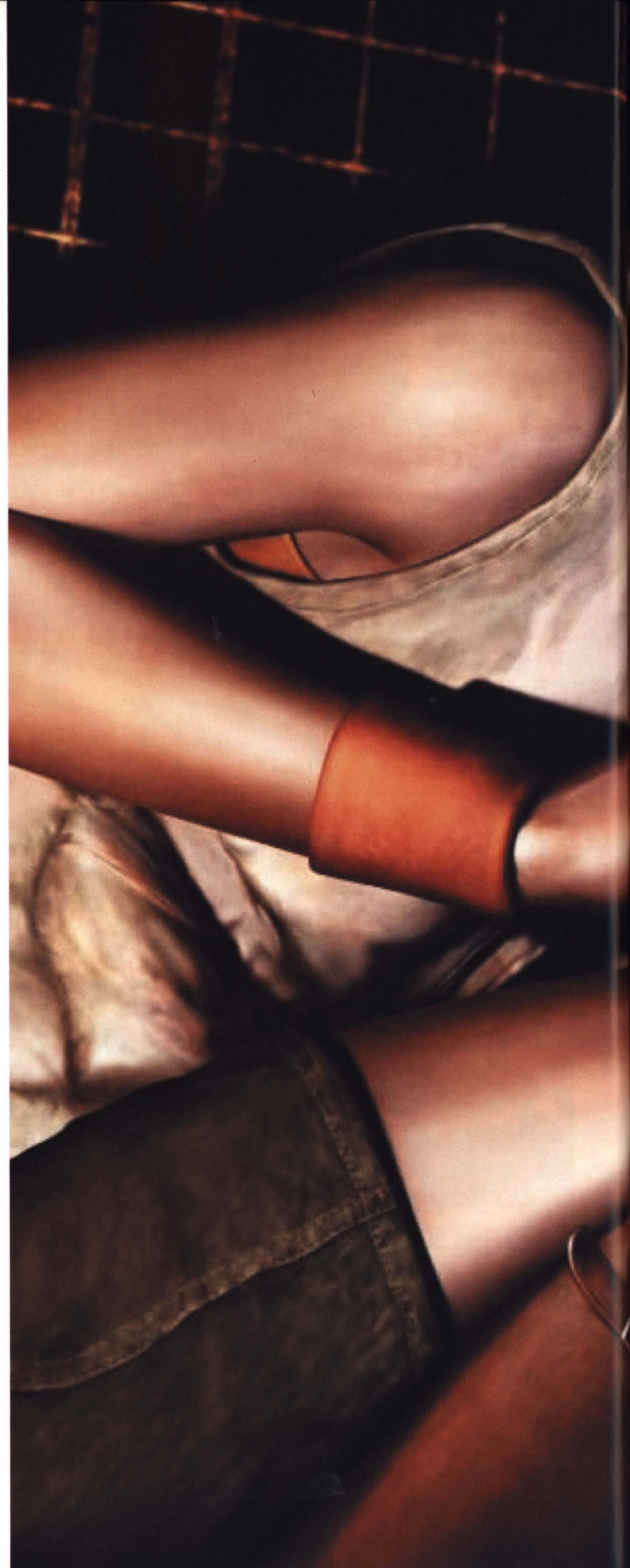


Institutions such as hospitals, schools and the church still dominate the *Silent Hill* experience. Their inhabitants have become more warped as time has passed. Running away is still a viable – and sometimes clever – strategy

**C**ruel. Not a word regularly associated with videogames – ‘violent’, ‘gory’, ‘gratuitous’ frequently – but not ‘cruel’. Violence is both commonplace and easy, but for it to become cruel requires a believable morality within a game’s world. That’s not easy to create if the postman’s doing the voice acting to a script by the lead texture artist. So KCEJ deserves much praise for its continuing pursuit of horror as art, and do beware the warning involving That Word at the game’s beginning.

As with its predecessors, *Silent Hill 3* aims to be more than the sum of its parts, but that’s not to say the individual components have been neglected. Combat now comes with a harder edge, due to faster enemies with noticeably upgraded brains. Weaker creatures hesitate and even retreat in the face of mêlée weapons, while monsters with things that roughly equate to arms can

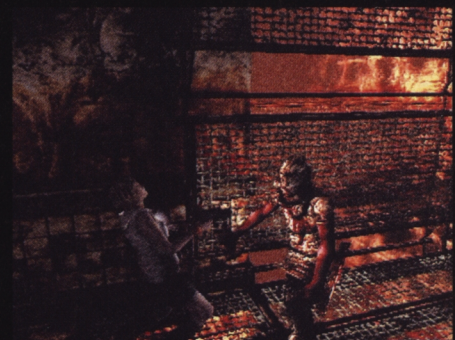
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silent hill 3







Subject matter is familiar, but no less effective for it – the symbolism as a whole is notably more intense, too



block swings, stabs and even bullets. As with confirmed civilians Harry and James before, Heather is a poor shot, but she is unique in hefting heavy weaponry. Beyond the familiar steel pipe and handgun she collects a spectacularly heavy maul (a spiked ball on a pole), a katana, a stun gun, a shotgun and a submachine gun. But despite the new firepower, this is still survival horror. Bullets and health packs should be cared for like children, and monsters must simply be avoided if at all possible, lest a dry click kills you later when bullets are the

thoughtful experience of its PS2 forerunner depends partly on the subtlety of the characters' motivations, even among the grand supernatural overdose of the plot. That the game's locations and your path through them work on a metaphorical level is, as before, also key.

In addition, the environments reflect the new verve – 'joie de mourir', even – by gaining a life of their own. Veins pulse on walls and floors, dust and steam settles and the change from 'real' to 'other' world happens in realtime. An inventive

## The game's imagery trumps past games for sheer ferocity, making even the darkest of Marilyn Manson's visuals look like disco

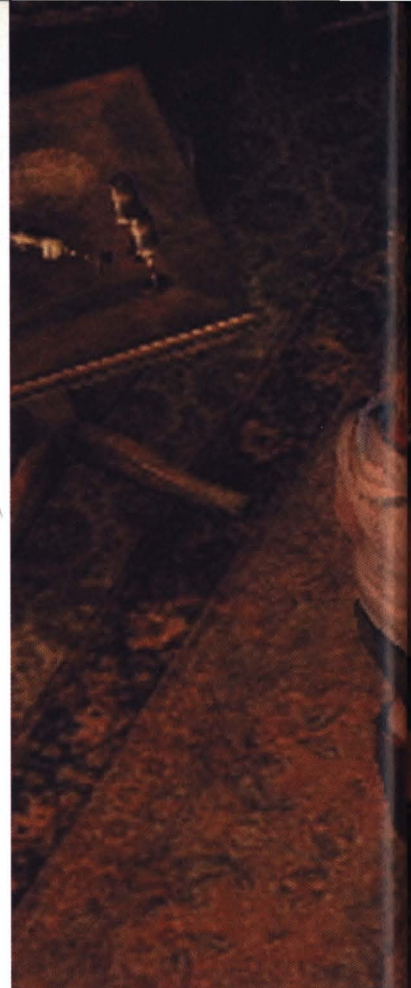
only answer. You remain resolutely outnumbered and extremely vulnerable.

Again like its predecessors, the outcome is affected by your behaviour, particularly by your compassion (or lack of it) for other characters, and a selection of post-completion treats – including a flamethrower, extra costumes and new game content – encourages replay. Then there's the beef jerky... placing a pack on the floor can distract monsters, letting you slip past without the need to bypass a second resolution as well and wage an ungainly war. It doesn't always work, however. Beware.

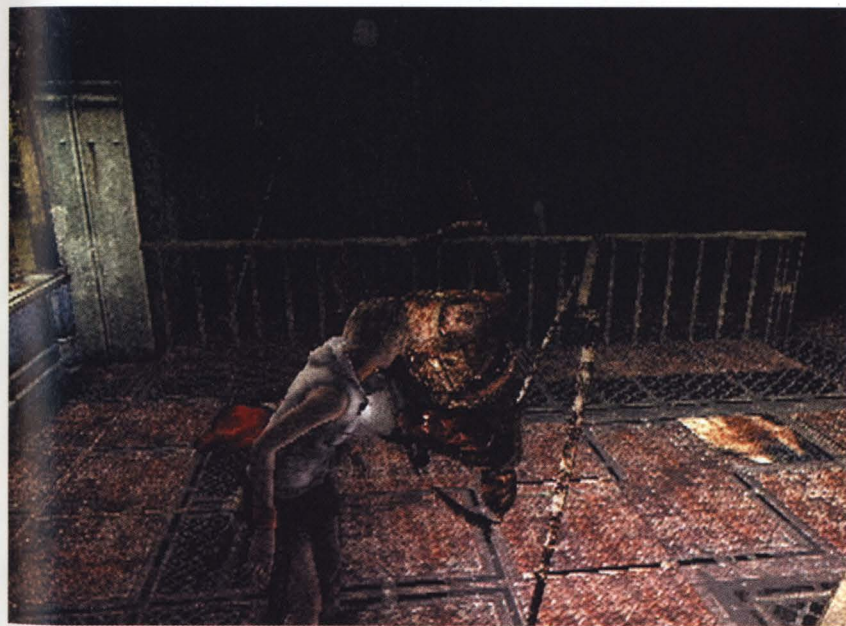
*Silent Hill 2* was noted for its brutally skewed beauty, and this sequel builds on it with greater detail and the option to 'sharpen' the image as well as disable the noise filter. Exteriors have gained fog but retain the occasional loading hiccup when Heather sprints – clearly the PS2 is working hard drawing such detail over large areas. Character models are superb, with expressive facial movements and only rare lapses into goldfish mouthings. Armed with telling body language and credible voice acting, they're more than capable of appearing human and, thus, cruel. Whether *Silent Hill 3* can replicate the

manipulation of focus also creates some outstanding effects, from the throwaway blurring of a lamp in the extreme foreground to a genuinely hellish dimension where buildings appear to be burning flesh and metal, and navigation is problematic in an unfocused, dream-like way. All of the imagery, in fact, trumps past games – and with them, everything else – for sheer ferocity, making even the darkest of Marilyn Manson's visuals look like disco.

Veterans will recognise locations from both earlier games, although the action doesn't move to Silent Hill until the halfway point, taking place in a small-town mall and subway before that. If you missed the PSone original you'll struggle with the significance of certain revelations as Heather confronts her identity, but it won't hamper your journey. Genuine riddles alongside familiar locked door 'puzzles' will, however, but there's a very good chance you'll swear more about what you see and hear than any inability to progress. Certainly Konami believes European gamers want this game more than anyone, as the PAL May 23 release is – unusually – ahead of the US and Japan. That's *Silent Hill 3*, then – cruel and unusual, but certainly not punishment.







Combat is sprightlier than previous games due to a deadlier range of weaponry, but the player remains at a considerable disadvantage. Ammunition is also sparse



## INTERVIEW: KONAMI EUROPE

Equip talked to Konami Europe chief **Kunio Neo** about PAL territories...

### Why is *Silent Hill 3* coming to the PAL market first?

As Konami of Europe we are constantly striving to do the best we can for European games players. We are aware that European gamers have been unhappy about the delay in PAL titles. We have listened to their complaints and have worked to improve the situation – hence the European premiere for *Silent Hill 3*.

### What sort of issues typically delay PAL releases, and what is Konami doing about that?

Localisation tends to cause the most problems. In Japan and the US only one language is needed and both use the same TV system. Europe is very different with a number of languages and another TV format to cater for. We have our own European studio (KOE PD) that is partly involved in the localisation process now, though, so there should be more improvements to the system in the near future.

**Does Konami have an unusual kind of empathy with PAL gamers? You have, in the past, released special-edition versions of your games here, for example, which is something more akin to a publisher selling into the Japanese market.** Konami established offices in Europe in the '80s, and since then the European staff has been focusing on European affairs and trying to achieve the best result for Europe. These special releases are part of our determination to give European games players the best possible versions of our titles. It is something we intend to continue, and have plans for enhanced European versions of several key titles.

### How committed is Konami to the PS2? Will it always be its number-one system?

Konami has never singled out the PS2 as its leading format. We are a multiformat content provider that develops exciting content for consumers. We are using all the available hardware platforms to achieve this goal, so that as many gamers as possible can have access to Konami games.

### Do you think horror-themed games will play a significant part in Konami's future? And how do you feel about the future of mature content in videogames?

No, *Silent Hill 3* is just one genre we cater for. We are strong in all categories and also able to develop new innovative concepts, such as the *Dancing Stage* phenomenon. With our strong and varied developers we can support all genres and obviously all players. Mature content will be provided for mature players, and younger content for younger users.



# Lara Croft Tomb Raider: TAOD

One of the hottest properties in gaming is getting a makeover. And what's this season's colour? Black...

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Core Design ■ Release: TBC



The game does not offer the kind of detail shown in earlier mocked-up screenshots, but it is nevertheless remarkable, with rich textures and dynamic shadows. New character Kurtis Trent prepares for action (main)

**L**ara Croft needs no introduction. *The Angel of Darkness*, however – the first *Tomb Raider* title to reach PS2 – requires more than a familiar nod and a half-raised palm. The game has changed, you see. Its developer is clear that this is not just another sequel. Have you heard that before?

Core's promises grew steadily more strident as the series fell into stagnation on PSone, but a handful of new moves and vehicles couldn't bandage the mummified experience at its ageing heart. When several thousand tons of pyramid got stuck in Croft's teeth in *The Last Revelation* many, not unreasonably, thought it was all over. They were wrong. Even within the *Tomb Raider* universe, people were wrong.

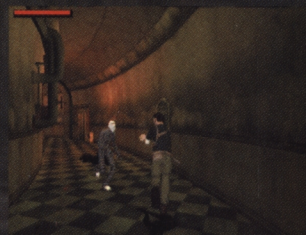
Croft's one-time mentor Von Croy was one of them, and as the catalyst for events in *The Angel of Darkness*, he very quickly finds out how wrong he was. From Equip's time with early preview code, it's clear that

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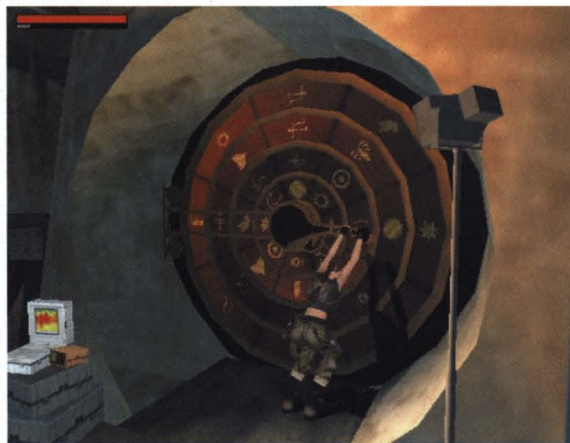
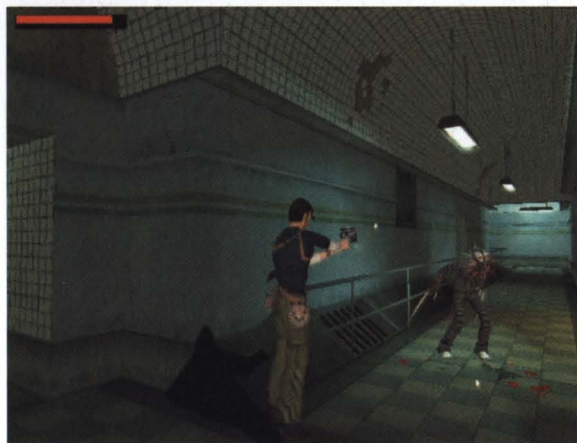
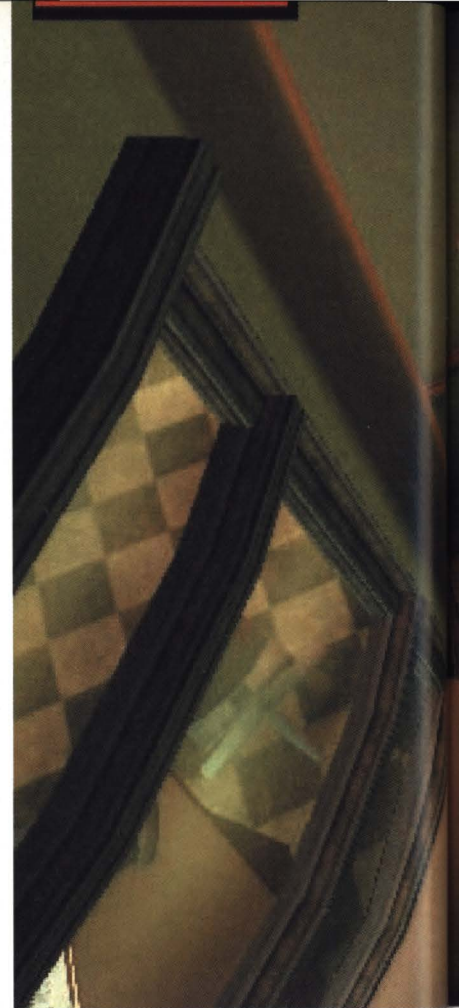




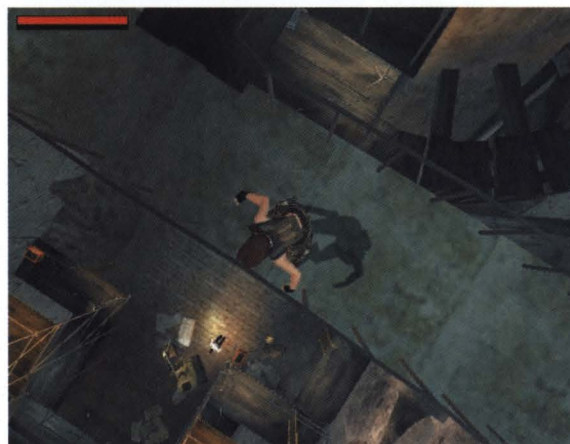


Predictably, scaling structures is a fundamental gameplay concern





Lara Croft has always been a flexible sort, but *The Angel Of Darkness* features some new twists – literally (top). Meanwhile, camerawork induces vertigo (right)



Core has gone to some length to deliver that promised darkness, that seam of flint upon which our acrobatic archaeologist might break a nail.

To briefly address the story, Von Croy is brutally murdered in his Parisian apartment in Croft's presence, and certainly the Gendarmerie think she did it – the heroine can't remember. Von Croy had been fearful of his latest employer, Eckhardt, and so begins a trail of clues that leads across the rooftops of Paris, far beneath its streets, and eventually to Prague.

Yes, Croft has new moves, but what's encouraging is the way each is properly integrated. Control remains familiar, but numerous detail changes make it far more fluid. Movement is fully analogue, and she climbs waist-high objects, ladders, drainpipes and rock surfaces with a simple forward impetus. Many animations are also quite beautiful. The promised *ICO*-style sense of self-preservation around drops has not materialised, but the inclusion of a desperate ledge grab upon the stab of a button is arguably more entertaining anyway. It certainly keeps you on your toes.

Stealth, then. *The Angel of Darkness* is not going to send Kojima back to the drawing board with *Metal Gear Solid 3*, but the circumspect creeping and peeking makes sense when you hit the streets as a murder suspect. More intriguing is that





players often have several ways of reaching one goal, with more daring feats promising greater rewards in the form of extra items and upgrades (more of which later). It's stealthy, then, but in a very *Tomb Raider* way. Challenges also go beyond evading guards and cameras to defeating, for instance, laser-based security systems in the Louvré – a kind of hi-tech retelling of Indiana Jones' temple infiltrations.

Also new is unarmed combat. There are a variety of throws, kicks and punches with which to 'quietly' take out enemies, and as the game progresses upper and lower body strength increases. There are four levels for each, letting Lara jump further, dangle longer and break through stronger barriers. At times the game awards upgrades automatically, but diligent explorers can find and make use of them earlier.

It's no PR spin: it's darker. Scattered like stones on a grave are hard new details, from the inclusion of flying blood to the flat concussions of the weapons – they really do sound deadly. Enemies range from the victims of human experiments, clattering madly about an asylum, to evil foliage. It's a long way from dogs and cartoon goons.

Croft's also solvent and hot to shop – this is Paris, after all. A herbalist sells restorative plants should the familiar medipacks prove insufficient, and some

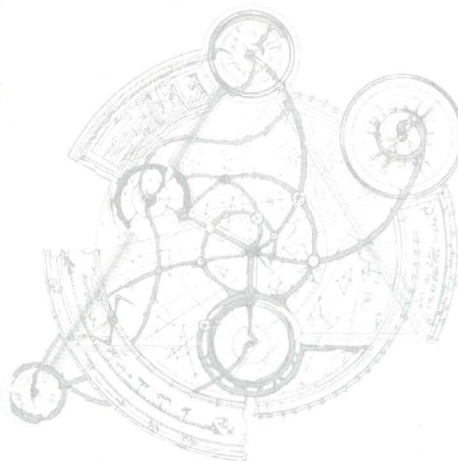


## Scattered like stones on a grave are hard new details, from the inclusion of flying blood to the flat concussions of weapons

items can be pawned – the shop owner is also a useful source of information. There's even a café, and it's here that players first glimpse Kurtis Trent, whose place in history is to be the first playable character besides Croft in a *Tomb Raider* game. Trent has mild powers of telekinesis and a selection of highly damaging weaponry, and as such his sections are high-action. He's playable for anywhere between five and 15 per cent of the game, depending on whose figure you believe, and if the character proves popular enough he could get a game of his own. First, though, we'd like to see this one. Sometime between April and June is the new estimate: let's hope Croft doesn't slip – or fall – again.



lara croft tomb raider: aod



Stealth elements are necessitated by Croft's position as a murder suspect; taking out hostile characters without making too much commotion is a vital consideration (above). Croft doing what she does best (left)



A café encounter sees Croft coming across Kurtis Trent. Obviously, a bond is soon formed

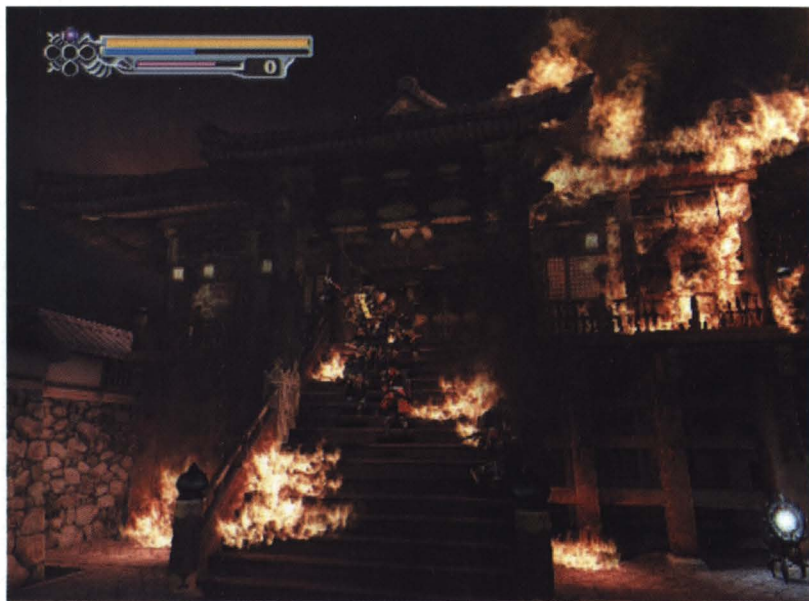




# Onimusha 3

Capcom's latest offers two breakthroughs: a western actor in a lead role and a graphics engine promising realtime 3D visuals

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **In-house** ■ Release: **Late 2004**



**F**ollowing his instrumental role in the success of the *MegaMan* franchise, Capcom producer Keiji Inafune's *Onimusha* series has underlined his ability to craft retail dynamite with admirable consistency. With over four-and-a-half million sales to date, his third – and, reportedly, final – part in the *Onimusha* series is a rather more ambitious project than its worthy but formulaic predecessor.

That Inafune has commanded a higher budget for *Onimusha 3* is clearly evident. Actor Takeshi Kaneshiro reprises his role from series debut *Warlords*, but it is the casting of Jean 'Leon' Reno as Kaneshiro's co-star that will most intrigue western gamers. Additional 'name' contributors include film director Takashi Yamazaki (responsible for the recent 'Matrix' knock-off 'Returner') and Donny Yen, a respected fight choreographer, who will both oversee the cinematic interludes.

Of greater import, perhaps, is the introduction of a new graphics engine. With *Warlords* and (to a greater extent) its sequel's use of prerendered backdrops

maligned even by series devotees, it's refreshing that Capcom has opted to utilise fully 3D environments. Viewing early footage of its two main locales – Japan of 1582, and France of 2004 – this decision appears both wise and eminently pleasing to the eye. The big question, of course, is how well Inafune and his team can address the camera and control issues that this new direction entails – but with no access allowed to playable code thus far, there is no ready answer.

One thing is for certain, however: *Onimusha 3* will largely discard the RPG elements of its immediate forbear, favouring the entirely action-oriented brief of the original. To assuage certain quarters, the move sets and available weapons for the two main protagonists will be much higher; this should increase the scope for a series of more imaginative and varied mêlées.

Despite its investment in external talent and the move into 'true' 3D, it's Capcom's ingenuity with the latter that will make or break this massive release.







Capcom's artists have captured Reno's features almost perfectly, right down to his I've-had-a-few-late-nights eyes. Perhaps of more interest to series devotees is the prospect of new weaponry: a Paris of the very near future will offer up a bundle of firearms that will surely make the previous games' edged weapons look antiquated



# Project BG&E

Unusual name (though it's only a working title right now), unusual game. *Rayman* creator Michel Ancel is creating a new type of hero

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft** ■ Developer: **In-house (Montreal)** ■ Release: **TBA**



As Jade, you're out to reveal the truths behind a dark conspiracy. This type of storyline is becoming a recurrent one in today's games, but at least Ubisoft is offering you the opportunity to reach your goal via varied gameplay



French graphics no longer look as... French as they used to (if you follow). *Project BG&E* still offers a selection of powerfully evocative scenes, though

When game designers proclaim their new adventure to be truly 'nonlinear', any student of gaming worth their salt will hear a cacophony of unspoken provisos and qualifiers. Because 'nonlinear', in development parlance, is practically an intensifier: a linguistic device that amplifies the meaning it modifies. For nonlinear, read: 'a few puzzles with more than one solution', 'a handful of divergent plot strands', and 'vaguely interactive NPCs offering stock information.' For nonlinear, read: 'it's big.'

*Project BG&E* (working title) is the baby and brainchild of *Rayman* creator **Michel Ancel**; an adventure in which players are promised an immersive, demi-authentic (given its sci-fi leanings) world to explore. And – no surprise – *Project BG&E* is billed as a nonlinear experience.

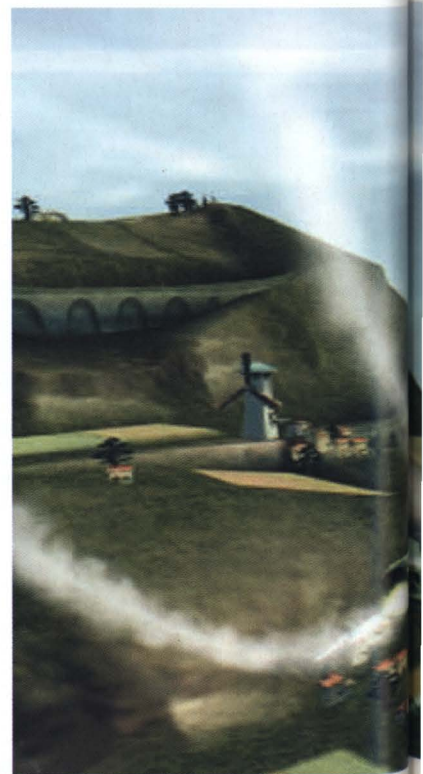
When Ancel tells **Equip** a little more about his project – its content was related in broad strokes at E3 last year but has barely been discussed since – it's hard not to be intrigued by the prospect of his latest work. "*Project BG&E* takes place in a distant future," he explains, "in a world at

war: Jade, the main character, is a reporter, fighting against propaganda to unveil the reality of a vast conspiracy. As an action reporter, the player will be able to perform a great deal of actions – photography, combat, infiltration, travelling – all linked naturally through the story."

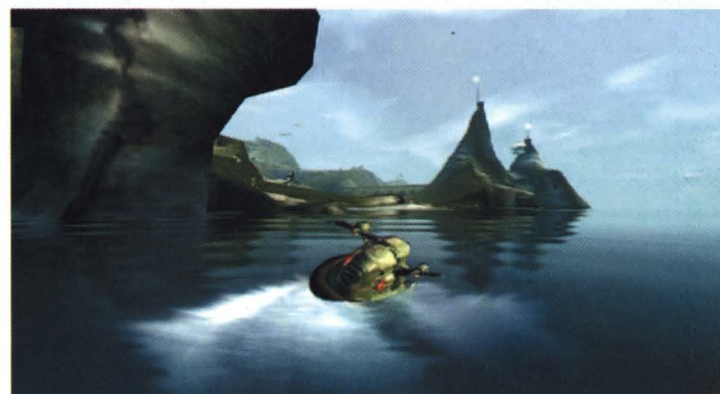
Reporter? Well, it certainly makes a change from the standard fare of hard-bitten former Spec Ops commando, or other assorted gaming clichés.

"To increase the feeling of freedom," Ancel continues, "we've created a whole world, open and nonlinear. Our project was driven by this feeling of freedom, we wanted to be able to embrace a single world at once and break the virtual 'walls' you usually find in videogames."

Due for a second, more decisive outing at this year's E3, *Project BG&E* has a lot to live up to. Mindful of previous games described in a similar manner – among others, *Outcast*, *Omicron: The Nomad Soul*, even the partially successful yet unwieldy *Morrowind* – it's forgivable to be cynical about Ancel's claims. But he has a proven track record, and seems to be taking time to get things right.







Flying sections clearly play a significant role in the game, although at the moment we're more intrigued about how taking photographs is going to be made a valuable aspect of the experience



# Resident Evil Online

As a slow-paced genre (at least until the shocks arrive), survival horror seems perfect for an online overhaul. And it's making the leap in style

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **In-house** ■ Release: **TBA**



Though it has an online twist, much of the series' hallmarks remain, including ankle-biting zombies and explosive weaponry

**P**erhaps fittingly for a game concerning zombies, little more tangible than moaning surrounds *Resident Evil Online*. Why isn't Capcom more forthcoming? Will the game be any more than a rather gory chatroom? Certainly, the company's PRs have located a press release-shaped hole, and nobody has the right item to fill it.

Online, Raccoon City will be a determinedly squad-based affair. Actually, such militaristic terminology is misleading: of the eight available characters, seven are civilians. The game ethic demands small groups of four, however, and in time-honoured horror film style, that group may occasionally be forced to split up. This throws up some interesting scenarios should certain members not appear at the agreed meeting place – do you go looking for them, wait, or just carry on? With communication via a USB keyboard promised, it's hoped that chat is limited to your immediate party, otherwise any potential tension could be lost.



Environments appear to be the most detailed yet seen in a PS2 *Resident Evil* title. Whether animation will match that of *Zero* on GC remains to be seen



The playable characters are new, rather than stars of previous *RE* games; the RPD uniform may look familiar, but this is in fact Kevin, not the erstwhile Leon. The others are Yoko, a young woman; Jim, a subway worker; Cindy, a barmaid; David, a plumber; Alyssa, a journalist; George, a surgeon; and Mark, a security guard. A mixed bag of skills is vital for a successful group, especially as weapons are as likely to be pipes and beams scavenged from the wreckage as pistols or machine guns.

Favourite enemies such as Lickers and dogs return, while many new mutants are promised. The AI will be tested not just by large groups of enemies and four

unpredictable assailants, but by what happens when those assailants fail: dead players are replaced by zombified versions under the game's control, which could cause havoc. The same goes for the scavenging villains who seek to loot you in the chaos. It will also be possible to carry injured comrades away from harm before things get that bad, again putting an emphasis on team play. A fourplayer splitscreen option provides offline combat, though detail levels will inevitably suffer.

Otherwise, *REO* bears comparison with its recent GC cousin, while promising a far more grandiose scale – and few could moan about that.



# Cy Girls

Konami presents two battling superheroines with the ability to surf networks in order to enhance their already considerable powers

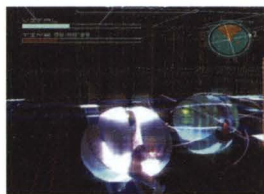
Publisher: Konami Developer: In-house Release: TBA

**C**y Girls has a very Japanese flavour. Typically, it's the 'near future' – perhaps around Wednesday – but further details are more intriguing, so you should forgive it that.

The girls in question are Ice and Asuka, espionage agents with different styles. Ice is the archetypally cool western blonde who favours bullets and devious hacking over brawling, while Asuka is an expert at close-quarters combat. There are ninjas in her heritage, so she knows how to handle her katanas and shuriken. Eschewing the familiar multi-character trait where 95 percent of moves and weapons are shared, even the Cy Girls' control system is character specific, bringing the prospect of truly varied play. The promise of an 'entangled' story also implies that both girls are used consecutively, rather than one being chosen from the start.

The Cy Girl tag comes from their ability to 'dive' into cyberspace and download new moves and abilities, and with Konami pushing the style element of combat, these additions should be expected to be a driving force as much as the plot.

Assuming the near future's not on a modem, of course, otherwise things could get a little slow...



Presentation gives the game a feel that is strangely reminiscent of the *Metal Gear Solid* series. Its stars are more athletic than Snake, though



# SOCOM: US Navy Seals

It has already gone down a (desert) storm in America; now SCEE is preparing to give PAL PS2 users their first taste of online play

Publisher: SCEE Developer: Zipper Interactive Release: May 30



The game does a good job of delivering realistic-looking environs, although its animation is rarely anything more than functional. But you'll be too busy shooting to notice



**A**s SOCOM is already available in the US, the singleplayer game is a known quantity for keen import players, but the online elements have yet to be sampled here.

And it's online that the headset communication really comes into play as a tactical element – or perhaps simply for dramatically screaming 'Noooooo!' as your buddy dies. You have three modes: Hostage Rescue, aping *Counter-Strike* in its mission to end a stand off; Demolition, with elements of Capture the Flag, providing a single explosive in no-man's land with which to take out your opponents' base; and Suppression, close to the traditional deathmatch, where the team with the most members left wins. It's certainly a good mix of popular elements, if nothing particularly daring in this day and age.

There's clan support and a chatroom for those about to do battle, though waiting times should be minimal with persistent servers and the ability to join one of the 16 slots per game at any point. Players will be pleased to find that the maps are not taken from any of the singleplayer game's 12 missions, but are online specific. And with frequent one-shot kills, indoor and outdoor fighting and regular choke points, turnover is likely to be high.







Interview:

# Jason Rubin

American codeshops have gained something of a reputation for producing super-slick character-driven videogames in recent years, but Santa Monica-based Naughty Dog is perhaps the most talented of the bunch. **Equip** met its co-founder for his take on PS2

**J**ason Rubin may not a high-profile name to many UK videogamers. And, if you look at his softography, you'll see a selection of titles whose existence may not ring any bells, apart from perhaps 1995's *Way Of The Warrior*, a particularly lacklustre beat 'em up on Trip Hawkins' failed 3DO platform. Not long after that game's release, though, something happened: the birth of *Crash Bandicoot* on PlayStation. Rubin has since been going from strength to strength, culminating in last year's *Jak & Daxter*. So, what's next?

**What are you working on right now?**

We're working on *Jak & Daxter 2* and it's due for release some time around Christmas this year, but probably earlier rather than later Christmas.

**Why does Naughty Dog specialise in cute platform games?**

That's a good question and it's probably better answered looking at the future rather than looking at the past. Every time we do a game we sit down and we say, "As a company, what do we want to do, what niche in the marketplace can we fill?" And it may be that the next time we sit down it won't be a character action game and it certainly could be that it will never be a character action game again. Six, eight years ago, character action

games were *the* games on any platform. We were the number two, number four and number six best-selling titles in the United States with *Crash Bandicoot* titles. And it was similar here. It's not like that any more. In 2003 there are 35-year-olds and 40-year-olds playing on the systems and they're not that interested in character action games, so it may be that in the future we do something else. There's nothing preventing us from doing something else.

**Would you say you make videogames for a demographic as opposed to making games for yourselves?**

Absolutely. We've always been a business first. We like to make good games – in no way are we sacrificing playability; we don't do licences just because there's a demographic there – but at the same time we like to sell to the broadest possible audience. We consider our art not only making games but making games that everybody wants to play. So in a sense we can measure our success by how many people are enjoying our games. And to do that you have to pick a game that's very broad in popularity. Back in the day that used to be character action games – a game like *Crash* could sell to six, seven million people, literally around the world out of a 40, 50 million installed base, which is a *huge* percentage. These days

I'm not sure we'd be talking the same sort of numbers. These days to sell to that broader audience you may need a different type of game. If you look at what's happened over the years, it makes complete sense that it's changed. The guys that were 15 or 16 on the NES are now 30 years old – it's that simple. And they still love games, and they're still buying games, but their lives have changed. They went from 15-year-olds to college kids, from college kids to first at work, and now a lot of them are married with their own children. So their interests are totally different.

**Is the ideal, then, to make a game that is relevant to all ages?**

We tend to try to do that, yes. I don't think Naughty Dog is ever going to be the type of company that goes for simple, sheer gore factor. We're not that kind of company and we're not really interested in that. But there are certainly things about games that are more mature in other ways besides violence, and we might head in that direction. And I think with *Jak & Daxter 2*, even, you're going to see that we've done a lot to make the game a little bit broader in terms of appeal. You'll see that he has weapons, you'll see that there are things that happen in the game, people die in the script, the plot is a serious one, it's not a kidnap plot, it's not

a light plot. In fact one of the motivators of Jak in the second game is revenge. (Oh, and Jak talks, too, by the way.) You look at those things and you're talking about a very different type of character action game. Picture for a second Mario on a revenge plot; Sonic on a revenge plot; even Crash out for revenge. I mean, Jak wants to *kill* the bad guy for what he's done to him.

**So you've done this because you've recognised a change in gamers.**

Without at the same time alienating children. We're not doing things in the game that's going to make a seven-year-old say, "Well, this isn't for me." And we're trying not to do anything that's going to make their parents say, "Okay, that's pushing it, we don't want to get to that."

**But what games do you play? Presumably you have experience of the likes of *Resident Evil*.**

I think I have a short attention span. The *Resident Evil* games have never really done it for me – they're too slow. I can see the artistry in them, I have nothing against them – I see them as good games – but it's never appealed to me. The *Grand Theft Auto* series, on the other hand, is something I have to be very careful with. It's like crack. I'm addicted to it. I got sick over my birthday, which was January, and



I ended up playing straight through – three days of *Vice City*. And I get so distracted by other things in that game besides the plot that I'll notice five hours have gone by and I haven't done a single mission. I find those games brilliant. And I'm not a violence guy, I'm not into violence for the sake of it, I've seen enough nudity at 33 – I mean, I've seen hookers on the side of the street, I don't need to see hookers in games, that doesn't do anything for me. But I love *Vice City* because the game itself is really good.

**Do you think the amount of freedom given to the player in *Vice City* signals some kind of future for gaming?**

It is a way forward. It is not necessarily the way forward. I'm not sure that, three years from now, there are going to be 'open' tennis games. Tennis games will still be tennis games. *Gran Turismo* does not necessarily need an option to allow you to get out of your car, walk to the side of the track and start mowing the lawn. One avenue of making new and innovative gameplay is certainly broadening things out. And I think there are two reasons behind why we're going in that direction. One: because it's interesting and it's new, but two: we *can* do it now. We couldn't do it in the past. And I think that graphics no longer drive gameplay in something like a tennis game. We're done with tennis. As far as I can see, there's nothing to do in that genre in terms of improving gameplay. Graphics cannot make those games any better. Sure, every strand of hair can be modelled perfectly; sure, his eyes can have six or seven levels of reflective map on the pupil alone, but that's not going to improve tennis. However, if you look at a game where you have this huge thing that you're trying to conquer, a whole city, and everything you can do in a city, then the power of new systems – PlayStation3, PlayStation4, Xbox2, Xbox3 – will allow us to better explore those genres, and I think that's why those genres have now become a) possible, and b) focal points, because we can do things that are more interesting as we move forward – whereas in tennis, we're done. Football, for the most part, we're done. There's not much more you can do in soccer or football that's going to interest anybody. Okay, great, the guy's kneepads can come off – what

does that really do for the gameplay?

**What are the real-term knock-on effects of having to build entire cities and other environments?**

It's become a pain in the ass to make games, there's no question. The first game that we sold took me four days to write and my partner one day to optimise. That was *Ski Craze* in 1985, on the Apple II. Now it takes two years, 45 people, and \$15m to make a game. There is no question that it's becoming more of a pain in the ass. And I would add that back when I was buying Atari 2600 cartridges they were \$60 to \$70. They're now \$30 and there's been inflation. So if you do the exchange rate it's actually become cheaper in every country in the world to play videogames, and yet the games themselves have gone from costing £5,000 to make to £15m to make.

**The userbase is bigger, though.**

It's a lot bigger but it's not ten times bigger. There are 100m PlayStation2s out there; there were more than ten

million 2600s out there. And the games are half-price. Gaming has become one of the best deals out there in terms of an entertainment source. If I go to the corner in LA, at Tower Records, I'll pay \$18 for a music CD, versus \$30-35 for a videogame. And a videogame is so much more entertaining.

**Well, the good ones.**

The good ones, sure. But it's the same for music. You can buy a CD and not want to listen beyond the first track.

**If you had to define what a Naughty Dog game is, what would you say?**

Naughty Dog games tend to be absolutely state-of-the-art, cutting-edge classics. We don't tend to go off and create new genres. We don't tend to go off and create entirely new forms of gameplay. But if we come into your genre, beware, because we're going to do the best, cleanest, tightest, funnest, most balanced, best-looking game in that genre. That's how I define Naughty Dog. We're not avant guard, we're not out there, we're not right



on the cutting edge, but at the same time, if we try to take you on, you'd better damn well be scared.

**You're in quite a privileged position in that you can spend a million dollars solely on R&D before a project goes into production...**

It was \$3.5m on *Jak & Daxter 2*.

**So you're in a position where you can create AAA titles. How do other developers compete?**

It's very hard. It's very hard. This is not a fair world. If I was a guy with no experience who was growing up in London who wanted to make games but didn't want to 'sell out' to the corporate world, well, it's just not going to happen. There's no way of competing. It used to be in the game industry that a really smart group of guys with a little bit of money – but with a lot of time and talent – could do it. That's how we made *Crash Bandicoot*. That was our breakthrough, it was eight guys going up against the corporate world.

**Didn't you have Sony backing?**

No. When we started, we had some money from Universal, but it was just our ideas, our muscle, and our elbow grease. You can't do that these days. It was one thing to scratch together probably \$300,000 it took to do a proof of concept on *Crash Bandicoot*, it's another thing to scrape together \$3m and 15 of the best programmers in the world that it takes to make an engine

He only does things for his closest friends. You can't even apply to work with him. He basically goes out and picks what he wants to do. You can't just go out and compete with Spielberg. It takes years to compete with Spielberg, and the videogame industry is the same. It's not fair, necessarily, but that's just the way it is. Y'know, if somebody's going to bank \$15m on a project, they better well have seen you do it before.

**What about friends in the videogame industry? Does it have its own Spielberg-Williams bonds?**

I think it's *starting* to happen. There are people that I see everywhere all the time. Take the Game Developers Conference, which is one of the biggest gathering places for people in the industry. There's a group of people who put that together and run it and those people do have influence over what is said at those events. So there is a group of people, but it's very different to Hollywood – Hollywood is ingrained, there's a lot of backstabbing and things like that – "He doesn't like him, he doesn't like him," etc – and as far as I can see there's very little of that in the games industry. My biggest competitor is Ted Price at Insomniac Games. He makes games for the PS2 that directly compete right now with what I'm doing, and yet we provided the engine for his game, *Ratchet & Clank*. And he provides us with technology for our games. That wouldn't have happened so much a while ago.

"If I was a guy with no experience who was growing up in London who wanted to make games but didn't want to 'sell out' to the corporate world, well, it's just not going to happen"

like *Jak & Daxter's*. It just isn't going to happen any more. It's the equivalent of saying, "Well, if you want to take on Steven Spielberg, how do you do it?" You can't. You can't just go out there and get the best people working for you. John Williams, the composer, doesn't work for just anybody. Even if you have a great movie you don't just go to John Williams. It's a friend thing. Williams is so busy, he turns down everything.

**Why are you both chasing the same type of gamers? That seems odd.**

It's just the way it's happened. It won't happen longterm. Longterm we've talked about it and we're just going at each other with hatchets and there's no reason for it. There's plenty of game space out there. We've had the same ideas recently and I think you'll see one or the other of us will change from character action games. Probably us. I don't know.



**You say you have 15 of the best coders in the world working at Naughty Dog...**

I would guess there's probably 300 *incredible* guys in the world, and we have 15 of them. Which is not to say that we have the majority of the people in the world, or anything like that, but having said that, we have a really tight group of them – whereas most other companies have one, maybe two, we've got a bunch. And that's the key. And as we collaborate with Insomniac we take some of the best people that they have, who I'd put in that 300. And we grab a couple of their ideas; they grab a couple of our ideas, and together we lift each other above what another company that may have two or three 'stars' could do because we're sharing that technology.

**How do you get hold of the best people? Is it simply a matter of**

**What sort of things?**

I want to talk very generally about *Jak & Daxter 2* because one of the things you may have noticed about Naughty Dog is that we never come out really early to hype our games and then seven or eight months later still haven't shown anything. We're still a couple of months away from letting people play it. It'll be at E3. I don't want to start hyping it too early, but I can tell you that what we're trying to do in general with *Jak Daxter 2* is make what is basically a bunch-of-gameplay-strung-together genre. And this has been going on since *Crash 1* for us – we've tried to push things together to create a fully immersive piece of work that doesn't force you into gameplay situations in the same way that this is this level, that's that level, things like that. Slowly but surely we've been adding plot to the point now where every single thing you do is driven by plot. There is very little collection, which there used to be. There is a reason

“Try balancing a level where at any time you can take out a hoverboard that's three times as fast as walking, and can rail slide and do all these things you can't normally do. It's tough”

**waving cash around?**

Cash and contacts. Mark Cerny knew a lot of guys and we've worked very closely with him over the years and we've slowly but surely started to pull those people in. Generally, the best programmers are very satisfied with where they are, both in terms of personality and financial situation, but companies go cold and sometimes those guys are looking for work, and if you have a good name and a good reputation you can take a stab at them. We just this year hired Yasaharosan, the lead designer of *Sonic 1*, *Sonic 2*, *Sonic 3*, *Sonic And Knuckles*, and a couple other Sonic games. So now we have the best guys from the *Crash* days, Mark from *Spyro*, the Gex guys from Crystal Dynamics, and Yasaharo, who comes out of nowhere and does things that we never would of thought of doing, things he couldn't do with his team because they didn't have the technical wherewithal. And all of sudden we're doing stuff that we haven't done before and it's awesome.

to do everything to get to the end point, just like there is in a movie. You have to go up against the bad guy, who in this case happens to be a baron, and from here to get there I need to do something for somebody or something like that – but not in such a simple 'I need a shovel; why do you need a shovel?; that's not important – get me a shovel' kind of way. It's not like that. There are very specific elements. And we've made one big world – with no load times, of course – and then we've said that if we give you something, we won't take it back. So for example in *Crash 2* you got the ability to dive underground and make a little lump. That was on one level. Then you got it one more time and you never saw it again. In *Jak & Daxter 2*, if we give you a gun, you've got that gun until the end of the game. We give you something else? You've got it from that point until the end of the game. In the middle of a level, no matter what you're doing, you can yank it out, or yank out your other things, and we don't stop you. It may be dumb to do what you're doing,

but we're not going to stop you because it's in your repertoire.

**That sounds like a nightmare to balance in terms of design.**

Exactly. It's very hard. Try balancing a level where at any time you can take out a hoverboard that's three times as fast as walking, and can rail slide and do all these other things that you can't normally do. Or, halfway through, you can jump off the hoverboard and in mid-air you pull out your gun and start shooting things – try balancing it. It's tough. But it really makes a difference because instead of having a bunch of levels strung together it feels like a world. And that's what we're shooting for.

**With J&D you created a no-load-time engine, which worked well. What do you think your relationship is with the PS2 hardware now?**

Oh, we've done so much better. It was a struggle not because of the PlayStation2 itself but it's always a struggle on new hardware to come up with an engine that's



world-class. And that was our struggle on the first game. This engine's 2.0, as opposed to 1.0, so we've gone and refined everything; we can get so much more out of this system. And on top of that we've also got all this free time to do effects that involve interesting stuff that doesn't simply concern getting things up on screen and moving. Your challenge is to get a game in the first title; in the second title you can really experiment.

**It's a difficult question to answer, but how far do you think you're pushing the hardware?**

My answer to that has always been this: everyone looks at the hardware as a cup and they say, "How full is the cup?" And the problem is, as time goes by, you get better and better at filling the cup. First, you fill it with stones and say that it's full – you put another stone in and it won't fit. But then you start putting in sand, and after sand you put in water. And at some point theoretically you can fill it. The problem is that all the time you're finding new corners of it, so in a sense the glass is getting bigger at the same time. We've got a lot more out of it, but at the same time you're always doing everything you can do at that time. If we do another game we'll get more out of it again. But we're pushing it. We're doing a lot of stuff.

**To use your analogy, then, are you filling the cup with pebbles, sugar or sand right now?**

Probably sugar. We're certainly not at the point where we're pouring water into the cracks. There's a lot more in that system. It's a great system.

**There's a new iteration of the PlayStation hardware on the way. How do you decide when it's right to move on to the next platform?**

That's an interesting question. It turns out that there's becoming less and less of a good reason from a graphics-only standpoint. So we've got to have another reason, and I think that probably will be the online compatibility right out of the box, and things like that. But right now you're looking at a situation in which, as I said, you're not going to improve most games with graphics.

**Is it true that you decided not to make**

**a Crash game on PS2 because the character was specifically designed to work with the limitations of PS1?**

Yes. Those weaknesses included screen resolution, which is why his head was so big. They included colour presentation, which is why he was bright orange. And it included the fact that we couldn't spool audio at the same time as everything else – or at least easily – and that's why he didn't speak. I look at progression of characters like this: what was the defining thing about Mario when he first appeared in *Donkey Kong*? The defining thing about Mario was that you could recognise him. Nothing else. He had no personality – you didn't know if he was happy, sad, anything. But he had a big nose and he had suspenders, and that was the first recognisable thing. It didn't change until Sonic, who had a single one-dimensional personality: he was fast. Sonic wasn't happy and fast, he wasn't sad and fast, he was just fast. But, as opposed to the original Mario, he was very different. And then you went to Crash. What was he? He was two personalities: he was witty but dumb. He was heroic but goofy. He was two things, which Sonic had never been, but he wasn't a full three-dimensional personality. You didn't see him cry. You didn't see him smile. You didn't see him go through that whole range of emotions. Dexter is the next generation of characters beyond Crash because Dexter is a full character; the question is now once you have a character like Dexter, who is funny but who has pain, who has a personality, where do you go? There's no more to do. I can see taking Dexter for 50 years. I can't see taking Crash for 50 years because Crash didn't have that personality. And if you look at the attempts to take Mario forward, Mario *still* doesn't talk. All he does is go yippee, woo-hoo. He has no personality, because giving him any personality at all changes Mario from Mario. He's an identifiable icon. Sonic is still fast, but put a voice on him, as they did with the TV show, and you ruin him. He's not Sonic any more. We didn't want to do that with Crash, so we had to move, we had to change. PlayStation2 was the first time where had that capability.

This is how Dexter would look if he did exist throughout time [see 'Dexter through the ages', p74]. This is 2600, effectively,



then Mega Drive and so on. And the thing you can see between 2600 and NES is, wow, what a difference. Right? Why would I buy this hardware? I would buy this hardware because I went from something that didn't look like anything to an identifiable character. Why would I change here [between NES and Mega Drive]? This is the Sonic-era version, with proper animation. Take another step – why would I buy the 3DO? Well, he does look better, but it's still 2D so there's not really anything much more interesting going on, so why would I buy it? Guess what – people didn't. Sure, it looks better, but there's not enough going on here, there's not enough stuff to make Gex an interesting character. Then along came the PlayStation. This version may not immediately look as good as the previous one but it's 3D, and that was the key. As bad as it might have looked as a 3D thing, it was *really* 3D. And that made people jump, and it was a *huge* influx into gaming right there because all of a sudden things massively changed from something that was flat and drawn to something that felt real.

This first PlayStation2 image you see there is the in-game character rendered out from *Jak & Daxter 1*. This guy [PlayStation2 'second generation'] is 12,000 polygons. That 12,000-poly model is actually running on *Jak & Daxter 2*. So we've stepped up. This guy here ['Next generation'] was rendered overnight,

using Maya. Now, I'm sure he could be better if we spent more time on him, but if we got close you could see that every strand fur is rendered, and everything like that. Now here's the question. Yeah, 500 polygons, 1,500 polygons, 12,000 polygons and then this. Where's the change? Where's the additional gameplay coming from there, as it did from 2600 to NES, from NES to Mega Drive, from Mega Drive to PlayStation? And that's what I'm a little nervous about. There's no 4D, so as far as the line goes this way, the character's eyes get deeper and deeper,

going to run out of stuff. And if you go back and look at some of these titles, you'll see that a lot of genres have come to that point – tennis being, for me, the most obvious. Yeah, sure, that guy can be absolutely, positively Lendl or whoever else you want him to look like, but he can't play tennis any better than he can in that screenshot right there. You can't zoom in on him during the gameplay or you can't play tennis properly – it has to be pretty much that viewpoint there, and that's why we've settled on it over the years. So this massive change to this

that what's really going to help them out is two things: one, new genres. You have the simple restrained game and you have the complex, unrestrained game such as *Grand Theft Auto*. You could make a sizeable difference to GTA; you could put more people in the city with whom you could interact, and more building detail, etc. You cannot handle that today. There's nothing you can do with tennis, but you can do something with GTA. That makes the PlayStation3 and Xbox2 viable platforms to me. And on top of that you can add online. And online, to me, is 4D.

“Why will people buy the next generation of hardware? That car can get so much better looking – I can see the dirt scuffs – but it will not change the gameplay; it will still be *Gran Turismo*”

and you get more reflection of the guy that's reflected off a mirror that's reflected off... Y'know, endless things can happen visually to make it look real, but he's not going to get any more personality. He's not going to get any more abilities. He's not going to get anything more than he has today. So, for me, we're done. We're done with the characters. There's nothing more we can do, and we have to innovate in some other way. The question is: why are people going to buy this hardware if that's the only change? And that's what worries me today. My fear is that we're

massive change to this one – where's the next one? That's what I'm worried about. Why will people buy the next generation of hardware? That car can get so much better looking – I can see the dirt scuffs and things – but it will not change the gameplay; it's still going to be *Gran Turismo*. And that's what's worrying me – how much better can that game get?

**Hardware developers must have this in mind.**

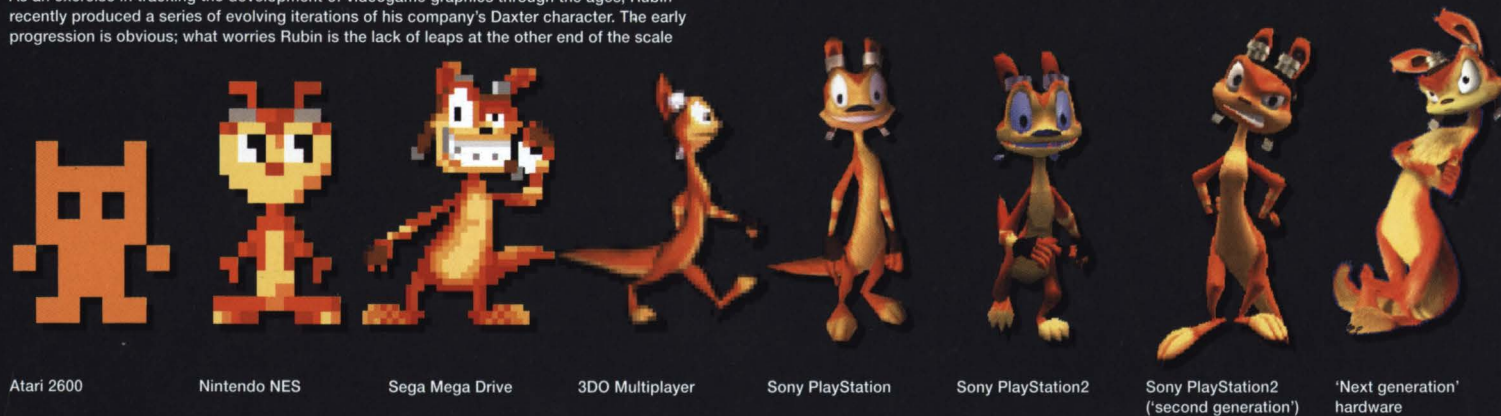
It's easy to push towards more polys, so of course they're doing that, but I think

That's the next generation. You can immediately see that it's different. I don't believe that playing a fighting game against someone on the other side of the world matters, but I can be in a game where I can converse and see the person I'm playing with, and there are reasons for us to collaborate together or go against each other – that to me is the next generation.

**How do you feel about having to make new types of games having focused for so long on things like *Crash*?**

## Daxter through the ages

As an exercise in tracking the development of videogame graphics through the ages, Rubin recently produced a series of evolving iterations of his company's Daxter character. The early progression is obvious; what worries Rubin is the lack of leaps at the other end of the scale



Atari 2600

Nintendo NES

Sega Mega Drive

3DO Multiplayer

Sony PlayStation

Sony PlayStation2

Sony PlayStation2  
(‘second generation’)

‘Next generation’  
hardware



We can figure it all out. There's a first for everything, so everybody's going to be new to this kind of thing. We're pretty good game designers. We have a rule set that we go through when we make games, and I think we did a good job on *Crash Team Racing*, which was a totally different type of game for us. I think we can tackle it. And it's interesting because it's not just going out and doing the same thing. You'll see that *Jak & Daxter 2* heads towards some interesting things. We always think, "OK, we have to make a game, but how can our game be R&D at the same time?" So we're doing R&D for the next generation at that same time as we're doing games.

**Vice City is one of the biggest-selling games of all time. We can look at it and say that one of the things it does quite well is replicate the real world. Is the drive towards realism the future?**

Not necessarily. 'Star Wars' is not real, but it's a very, very interesting universe – albeit to an extent ruined by the last few movies.

**But take your average Joe who didn't play games of the 16bit era because of the leap of imagination required. Surely realistic content is only going to grow the market.**

There have been some very good 'Star Wars' games, notably those produced by Factor 5, but the problem is that those games have relied in many respects on graphics and not innovative gameplay. And I think the question the gamer is going to ask more and more now is: sure, I can see that it looks more authentic, but show me what's new; show me how it's something that I haven't done before. A fully open city, with freedom, is something I haven't experienced before. Show me how it's something I haven't experienced before. That's where we have to go with our game. Not 'Star Wars' alone. Not better-looking X-Wings. Show me how to do something in the 'Star Wars' universe that I have not done before. Show me how to become Han Solo and go to planets I've never seen before in the universe, and to build myself up in the universe as a bounty hunter, or whatever. It doesn't necessarily mean realism; it doesn't necessarily even mean freedom – just show me something I've never seen before. Because graphics alone aren't

going to drive me there. There's not that much difference between the original vector-graphics *Star Wars* coin-op and the last Factor 5 *Star Wars* game. The defining aspect of the next generation will be people who can deliver something people have never seen before. Those are the people who'll make money.

**So you don't think the insane popularity of more realistic games will mark the death of the fantasy/sci-fi genres?**

No. Generally I look at a game's content, I don't look at the world. People are always going to be interested in a lot of different types of world. Fantasy will still be interesting. Everyone said fantasy was dead and then, out of nowhere, the 'Lord Of The Rings' trilogy is kicking ass. So I don't ever view the world you wrap it in as being that important.

**But you're a seasoned gamer. This is more about the super-massmarket, the people who have no interest in sci-fi, who don't go to see the new 'Star Wars' movie...**

They're watching 'The Lord Of The Rings', though.

**You may be right. Perhaps it's a family thing.**

And look at 'Spider-Man'. That's a geeky comic book from our youth, right? And yet somehow 'Spider-Man' is bringing in women, children, old people, everybody. And that's a fantasy world just as much as 'The Lord Of The Rings' is.

**How about licences in the future?**

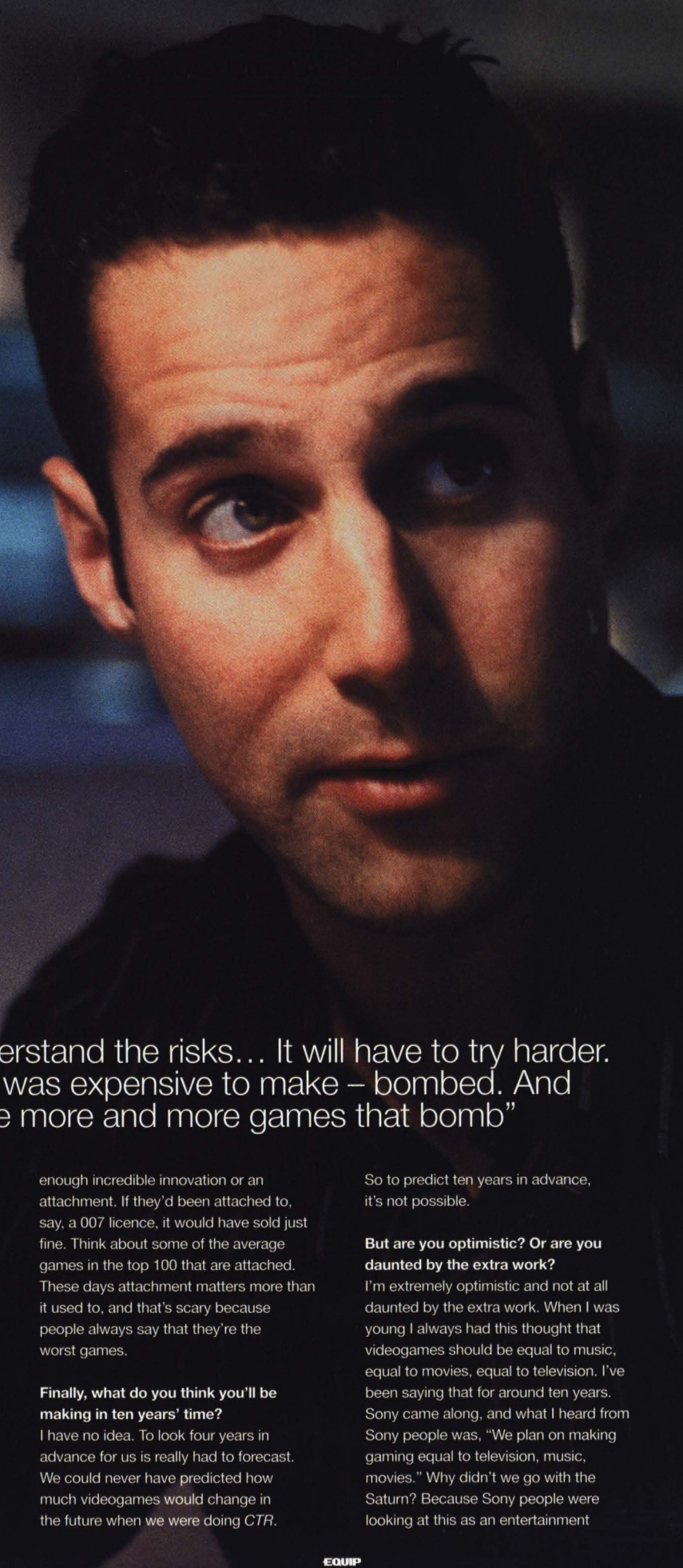
As well as innovation driving sales, attachment for a company executive seems like a good idea. And it's already

happening. Thirteen of the 100 best-selling console titles in the US last year were unattached. Thirteen out of 100 had original content.

**But where were they in the top 100?**

SOCOM did very well. Because it was: show me something I haven't seen before. *State Of Emergency* – again, something that hadn't really been done before – did very well. *Stuntman* was also unique. Then you get to a game like *Ratchet & Clank*, and you're already down in the 30s. The last three of these are 89, 94 and 97. *Eternal Darkness* and *Hunter: The Reckoning* didn't do very well, but they still made the top 100. And this is of course just the US. I think, anecdotally, one out of the top 20 games from last Christmas on PS2 in the UK was unattached. So the





same thing's happening here in the UK.

**So what's the solution?**

I don't know. What it means is that if you want to make a unique individual game, the odds of success are a lot less these days. If you're just trying to do the genre one better, with graphics, you're going to fail. You can't replace *Madden* easily – it can't be replaced on graphics alone. That used to be the fight for football games – it was about graphics, but it's no longer that. *Madden*'s graphics are good enough. To beat it, a very attached game, you have to beat it with something new, something people haven't seen before.

**Do the people giving the greenlight to today's games need to be told what gamers want to play?**

It's a hard question. If you look at a company like Sony, it's sponsored a good number of unique titles. It takes those risks. Sony needs to understand what those risks are, because Sony's always been a very cavalier company about trying to push gaming into new spaces. Well, the days of the PS1, when they did that, have passed. These days Sony's going to have to fight harder. *Mark Of Kri* – which was quite expensive to make, and it included a lot of unique elements – bombed. And there are going to be more and more of

“Sony needs to understand the risks... It will have to try harder. *Mark Of Kri* – which was expensive to make – bombed. And there are going to be more and more games that bomb”

those games – games they try hard with – that bomb. The suits have always tended to go for low risk, so those guys have been attaching for a long time, and there are certain companies that will always do attached games.

***Mark Of Kri* was an interesting game, but it seemed to simply pinch ideas from other games and mix them all together. Which isn't the most imaginative way to make something.** I thought it was a decent game. But, in this day and age, unless you're going to come to the table with enough innovation then you need an attachment in order to survive. And they didn't have either – not

enough incredible innovation or an attachment. If they'd been attached to, say, a 007 licence, it would have sold just fine. Think about some of the average games in the top 100 that are attached. These days attachment matters more than it used to, and that's scary because people always say that they're the worst games.

**Finally, what do you think you'll be making in ten years' time?**

I have no idea. To look four years in advance for us is really hard to forecast. We could never have predicted how much videogames would change in the future when we were doing *CTR*.

So to predict ten years in advance, it's not possible.

**But are you optimistic? Or are you daunted by the extra work?**

I'm extremely optimistic and not at all daunted by the extra work. When I was young I always had this thought that videogames should be equal to music, equal to movies, equal to television. I've been saying that for around ten years. Sony came along, and what I heard from Sony people was, “We plan on making gaming equal to television, music, movies.” Why didn't we go with the Saturn? Because Sony people were looking at this as an entertainment

medium and Sega people were looking at it as a games system. Sony has continually stuck by that and look where are today. And I think that will continue, and I would not be surprised if it's not only equal but, because of the interactivity – which music, movies or books do not have – it adds a bit of an edge. And, once online comes along, social interaction is going to further that, to kick it to the next level. You sit silent at the cinema or in front of the television. It's great to talk about it afterwards, but the beauty of gaming is that you can talk and play at the same time. And interactive community. I think that's going to be *huge* in the next decade.





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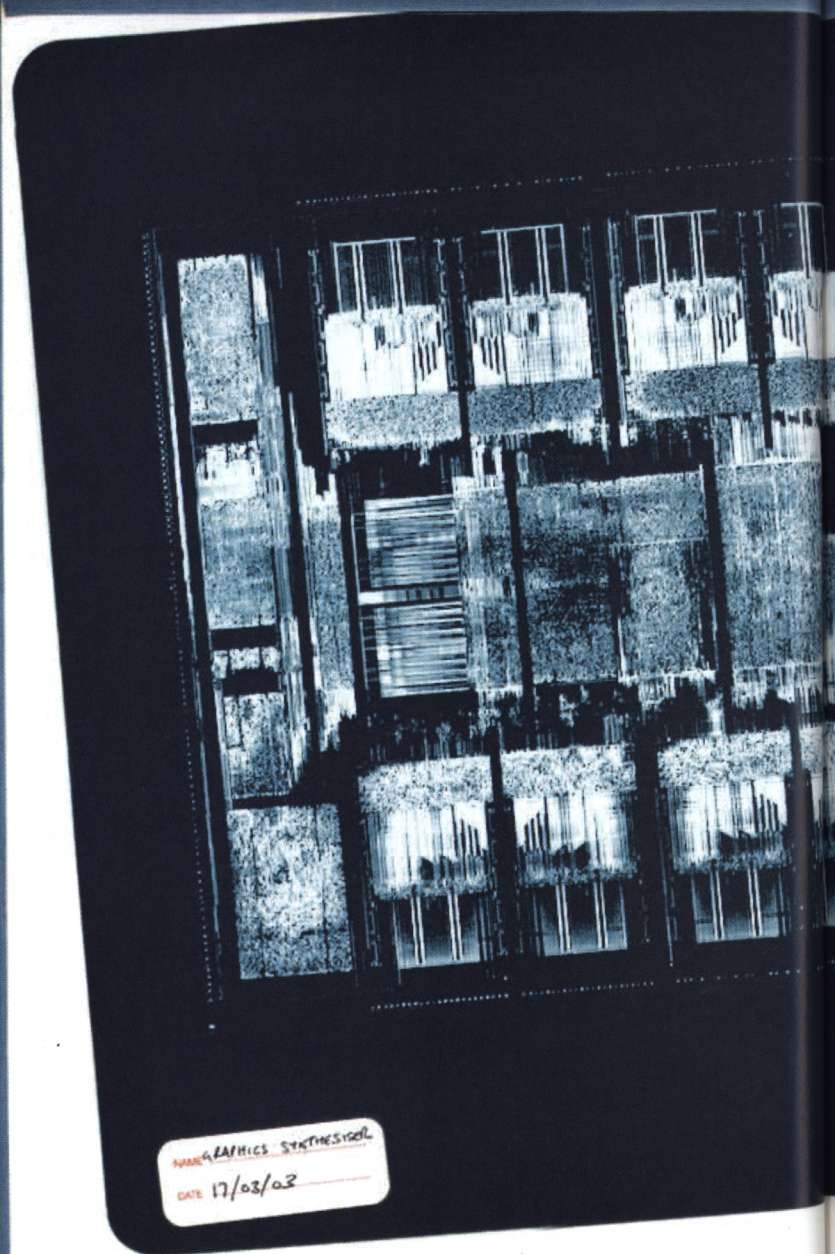
# PlayStation2 Examined

Everyone knows what PlayStation2 games are like, but mysteries still cloud the actual development process. **Equip** looks at the hardware in detail and sets out to debunk some myths along the way...

**B**y its very nature, success is a state that destroys the tension of its genesis. For example, it reduces the gambles and risks of British history, from the Spanish Armada through Waterloo and the Battle of Britain, to stroll towards – to every schoolkid, at least – a known outcome. At best, the uncertainty of the actuality of events is reduced to Wellington's gruff one liner, "It was a damned close-run thing."

Known as historical determinism, this is the assumption that somehow the progression and eventual success of a leader, nation, company or product was somehow fated to be. As with the simplest electronic circuit, the flip flop from 0 to 1, the switch from failure to success, in retrospect, becomes the logical outcome. And so it has been with PlayStation2. The mind-boggling technological leap realised when Sony released the specifications of its 'next generation PlayStation' four years ago was quickly forgotten – overtaken by debate about the quality of the software as soon as it was launched in Japan in March 2000. Since then, PlayStation2's success, initially inconceivable to

Continued ➤







Original format: CDD, Amiga  
Publisher: Rainbow Arts  
Developer: Factor 5  
Origin: Germany  
Original release date: 1999

NAME: EMOTION ENGINE  
DATE: 17/08/03



all except Sony's most enthusiastic salarymen, has eroded the singularity of Ken Kutaragi's vision, reducing it to the status of a done deal.

In a sense, of course, this is a good thing – after all, PlayStation2 is just a games console. Whatever is occurring inside the black box, it's what's happening on the television screen that people care about. But even now, after the launch of two competitors, it's important to realise that PlayStation2 remains the most cutting-edge piece of consumer electronics ever realised, and it will remain so until Sony unveils a successor.

### Striking the balance

The main decision when designing a game console is the trade-off between performance and cost. A console must launch as the most powerful piece of gaming hardware available, even compared to high-end PC systems, while being an order of magnitude faster than previous generation consoles. For example, PlayStation2's Graphics Synthesiser chip can process 36 times as many pixels per second as PSone could and was twice as powerful as top-end professional graphics cards of the time. Similarly the much-vaunted Emotion Engine CPU was around four times as

powerful as the then-standard 500MHz Intel Pentium III. What is much harder to offer is this performance at a suitable price point. Top-end PCs sell for £2,000. PlayStation2 launched at £300.

The trick to driving these conflicting demands to an optimum point is the ability to control the complete production chain from chip design through silicon manufacturing and finally console assembly. For, although it requires a huge amount of initial capital investment, such control gives hardware designers complete freedom over their architecture, while ensuring the cost of a console can be aggressively reduced as the production process is optimised. This is something in which Sony, one of the world's most experienced consumer electronics companies, is well versed.

"Although we licensed technology from companies such as MIPS and Toshiba for the design of the Emotion Engine, one of our main strengths is that the production lines for the Emotion Engine and Graphics Synthesiser are Sony production lines," claims **Paul Holman**, vice president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's technology group.

For example, the original PlayStation design, known as the 1000 series, consisted of 17 individual chips on a double-sided motherboard. When finally redesigned as the





PSone, it had been reduced to less than ten on a single-sided board which, in turn, was atomised down to a single chip which provides PlayStation2 with its backwards compatibility. This process explains how Sony is able to drop the price point of its hardware so quickly. It's an ability that has given it enormous market advantage over rivals from Sega and Nintendo through to Microsoft. Not one of these companies designs its own silicon or owns its own production plants.

"If you look at what happened with PSone, we were able to shrink everything down significantly," Holman points out. "We'll be able to do the same with PS2 as well over time."

### Smarter than average

To understand the radical nature of PlayStation2, it's useful to compare it with the most common computer architecture, that of the PC. Consisting of a main CPU with separate graphics and sound subsystems connected by slow information buses, the PC is designed for general-purpose computing. This means it can handle any number of processes including Web browsing, word processing, Internet connectivity, playback of sound files, as well as 2D image and 3D graphics manipulation.

Or, to put it in more technical terms, the PC is characterised by the ability to perform a large amount of varied instructions on a relatively



Paul Holman, vice president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's technology group

relatively large and datasets relatively small and static, the bandwidth available between the CPU, graphics and sound components can be narrow.

PlayStation2, in contrast, turns this architectural paradigm on its head. The dataset for a game consists of a huge amount of dynamically changing textures, models and environments. Such datasets are so large and variable that it is simply inefficient to try to store them in a cache. Again, in contrast to the PC, the range of instructions operating on this data is small. Compared to the general-purpose PC, therefore, PlayStation2 is designed for a single purpose: crunching a large amount of fast-changing data with a few repetitive instructions.

"I thought the Graphics Synthesiser would have got more attention, but I guess everyone got bogged down in the promise of 'emotion' in games"

small and static dataset. It's for this reason that the performance of a PC is generally signified by its CPU clockspeed, which is a measure of the number of instructions it can handle per second. The higher the clockspeed, the faster the PC can crunch through its tasks, which is the reason companies such as Intel place such importance on the continuing rise of its CPUs' GigaHertz rating.

Another way of improving PC performance is increasing the amount of memory available to the processor. Typically this is the focus of graphics chip companies such as Nvidia and ATI, which are now shipping components with up to 256Mb of RAM. As well as the PC's main system memory, CPUs also have several cache memories, which are located close to the processor, allowing both data and instructions to be stored in easy reach. Finally, because these memory blocks are

of the Emotion Engine CPU at 294.9MHz seemed underpowered compared to other technology at the time. The simple fact is: it doesn't need to be any faster. This is also the case because the Emotion Engine is a 128bit system. A measurement of the size of instructions a processor can handle, it is another example of Sony's design goal to make PlayStation2 a small-cache, high-bandwidth system. Notably, 64bit processors are only now being launched into the desktop PC market, demonstrating how, five years on from its design, PlayStation2 remains ahead of the curve of general computing.

But while the Emotion Engine received much of the press attention when PlayStation2 launched, according to Holman it's not the most revolutionary part of the system.

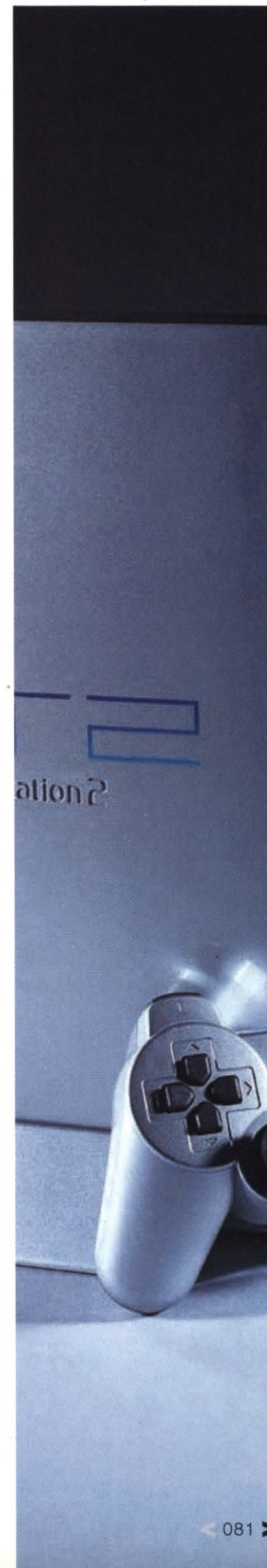
"Although the Emotion Engine is nice, at heart it's yet another MIPS-based processor," he explains. "The Graphics Synthesiser, on the other hand, is much more interesting. The bandwidth to it is enormous and the way you can use the Vector Units with it adds a lot of performance. Personally, I would have thought it would have got more attention, but I guess everyone got bogged down in discussions of whether this or that title was bringing 'emotion' to gaming."

Nicknamed 'The Beast' by Sony insiders, the Graphics Synthesiser is, despite claims to the contrary, the heart of the PlayStation2. For while the Emotion Engine is a fascinatingly complex collection of processors, the reason for its existence is to feed enough data into the almost insatiable rendering appetite of the Graphics Synthesiser. Continuing Sony's general philosophy for the console, it is designed to process large datasets very quickly, with a minimum of memory overhead. For example, it only has 4Mb of memory, which in current terms sounds like an obscenely small amount. Indeed, one of the oft-heard general criticisms of PlayStation2 is that it doesn't have enough video memory – which only shows a basic misunderstanding of how the system works, as the RAM is embedded on the same silicon as the Graphics Synthesiser and connected by a bus boasting a 2,560bit bandwidth.

Combined together, however, the Emotion Engine and Graphics Synthesiser make up a formidable partnership that fulfils both parts of Sony's original design dilemma: cost and performance working in total harmony. And that's why PlayStation2 offers consumers the most bang for their buck. It's one of the reasons behind the console's massive success.

### Big pipes, small memory

This is why PlayStation2 is such a strange device. Even when announced, the clockspeed





# Making the thin lady sing

Developing games on PlayStation2 has been a steep learning curve for many codeshops, but everyone agrees that there's plenty more power waiting to be exploited

**T**hat PlayStation2 is 'a bit tricky to program' has become something of a cliché, even for those on the fringes of game development. But what does this actually mean in practice? According to every developer **Equip** has asked, a lot of extremely hard work.

"Imagine the excitement of Christmas morning; you rip open the box to find the world's most powerful games console dev station, waiting for you to delve into its mysteries. But – oh no – no disks have been provided, so you have to download the libraries and demos, which takes another four hours," recalls Mucky Foot's **Mike Diskett** of his first taste of PlayStation2.

He continues: "At last it's working. The office eagerly gathers round as you prepare to show off the no-doubt dazzling display of technical wizardry the Sony engineers have cooked up in their technical demos. Alas, it's one untextured spinning cube after another as Sony itself endeavours to give the impression that even it hasn't figured out how the damn thing works. The impressive bobbing, floating rubber duck demo from the launch is sadly missing. Eventually you find a nice static dinosaur demo and make do with this as a

"Getting anything on screen was a tough job. We spent weeks reverse engineering tiny samples of VU code just to display a triangle"

starting point for learning about the nature of the beast."

## Shared experiences

They're colourful, certainly, but Diskett's experiences were mirrored by plenty of others. "Our first reaction was along the lines of 'What planet is this thing from?'" says Reflections MD **Martin Edmondson**.

"Our first PS2 dev kit was a strange-looking collection of PCBs and wires so delicate we were scared to even touch it," echoes Blitz's core technology manager **Richard Hackett**. "Getting anything on screen was a tough job. We spent weeks reverse engineering tiny samples of Vector Unit code to get a solitary triangle to display."

And this was the rub. Even when developers did manage to get 'something running on screen', they were clearly a long way from understanding the power inherent



*World Rally Championship II: Extreme, Big Mutha Truckers and SSX use procedural geometry to generate organic-looking environments. It can be tricky to implement, but the technique is growing in popularity*

in the system. "DMA? GS? EE? GIF? SIF? IOP? IPU? VIF0? VIF1? VU0? VU1? What on earth does it mean?" recalls **Steve Humphries**, one of Jester Interactive's senior programmers. "The single biggest lesson we had to learn was how to get all these various processors talking to each other, and even then we had to work out how to move data around the system efficiently."

According to Paul Holman at SCEE, one of the reasons for this initial bewilderment was that Sony's approach with respect to developer support was markedly different for PlayStation2. "When PSone came out, we provided a whole series of libraries and the expectation was developers would use them throughout," he says. European developers, in particular, demanded lower-level access to the hardware, however. The result was, despite its

obvious complexity, with PlayStation2 Sony gave developers what it thought they wanted: fewer libraries but lots of detailed information about how the system worked.

"I admit people have had a hard time," Holman says. "It was a tricky system to get to grips with, but developers did manage to do it. To an extent, they will always complain about any system: they love it and they hate it. They always want as much information about the hardware as possible and the best development tools too, but the nature of the console market is that this sort of material only becomes available over time, especially when taking such a radical approach as PlayStation2."

## Smoothing the bumps

One issue which seemed to epitomise





those early problems was anti-aliasing. This catch-all term applies to a number of techniques which attempt to smooth out jaggies. The failure of launch PS2 software, particularly Namco's *Tekken Tag Tournament*, in this regard caused a press outcry – something not helped by the mischievous intervention of *Oddworld's* Lorne Lanning, who claimed it as one of the reasons for switching the development of his game from PlayStation2 to Xbox.

"It was a frustrating time," Holman says. "For some reason, there was a lot of incorrect speculation that there wasn't any support for anti-aliasing in hardware, but there was."

At one development conference, Phil Harrison, Sony Europe's senior vice president of development, even ripped the relevant page out of the PS2 tech support manual in order to demonstrate to developers that anti-aliasing was supported in hardware.

"As with any new piece of hardware, people have to learn the system," Holman cautions. "The issue eventually boiled down to the fact that some developers wanted to implement anti-aliasing in a different way to the hardware approach we had set down. No problem. The main role of the technology group is to support them, so we worked out what they needed and came up with some sample code which showed how to go about it via a software route. And if you look at the

quality of PlayStation2 titles today, there's no problem with anti-aliasing."

### Setting the benchmark

The first UK developer to really show what Sony's hardware was capable of was *Free Radical Design*, whose *TimeSplitters* was the one European launch title that made PlayStation2 worth buying.

"We were coming at it from a different

angle to the majority of developers," admits FRD co-founder **Steve Ellis**. "Having only recently formed the company, we didn't have an existing codebase we were trying to crowbar onto PlayStation2. Our code was written from the ground up with the limitations of the PS2's unique architecture in mind. Consequently, when we received our first prototype development kit, our engine was up and running within less than 24 hours."

Ellis also thinks the intricacies of PlayStation2 played to the advantages of hardcore UK coders, who traditionally have always worked on machines with tighter memory allocations than typically seen on PC-style hardware. "Being a low-level programmer at heart, it was the most fun I'd had since the Amiga days," he explains. "It was refreshing to have such direct and unrestricted access to the hardware. For me, that's the hardware's biggest advantage. There are no poorly conceived APIs to work with – you get precisely what you ask for. No more, no less."

He will concede, though, that even a team as technically savvy as Free Radical hasn't unlocked PlayStation2's full potential. "In *TimeSplitters 2*, we managed to double the performance we achieved with *TimeSplitters 1*. I believe that with some more difficult optimisations and careful planning, at least another 50% increase is possible."

And, in a sense, the struggles developers had creating their first games will accumulate a future payoff: their second- and third-



Early PS2 game *Tekken Tag Tournament* (above left) showed what happens when a developer rushes things. Having said that, though, Free Radical Design managed to produce a capable PS2 game (*TimeSplitters*, left) in a mere seven months. However, the developer admits that the sequel (above) saw a performance leap of 100 per cent, thanks to extra experience with the format

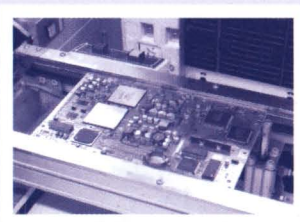


generation attempts are going to look significantly better. "That's one thing about PS2 now – developers are now really getting in the swing of things," agrees Holman. "They have access to tools like the Performance Analyser, they know how the hardware works, which approaches work best, and we are going to see better games as a result. The weakness of other approaches [to console design] is, if you lay your cards on the table, you end up playing them all at the same time."

### Getting the most from PS2

The main area of focus for developers at the moment is ensuring that their code is using the DMA chain and four processors of the Emotion Engine as efficiently as possible. One man who

"The biggest advantage is that the Vector Units can be programmed to do whatever you wish: raytracing, audio mixing – the list goes on"



On the production line, Graphics Synthesisers don't look especially daunting. It's when you're faced with coding the things that it gets tricky

knows all about such complexity is SN Systems' director **Andy Beveridge**. Unlike developers, who merely have to learn how to program the VUs, SN creates Windows-based PlayStation2 development tools, the default Sony tools being Linux-based. This means not only did Beveridge and his team had to work out how to program the VUs, but they also had to work out how to debug them.

"The biggest issue developers come up against is the complexity of programming the PS2 architecture requires," Beveridge says. "Much of this centres around the VUs and DMA engine, which controls the flow of data, which can be anything from sound, textures, DVD data to umpteen small VU programs, in/out/around of the various subsystems of the Emotion Engine."

Understanding VU0, in particular, is seen as a key part of improving PlayStation2 game performance. Incredibly, most of the first wave of games hardly used VU0 at all, so concerned were developers with stalling their data flows to other processors. However, with the main bottleneck of many games being the CPU, and not the Graphics Synthesiser, offloading tasks from the Emotion Engine's MIPS core onto its co-processing Vector Unit will have a massive impact on overall performance.

"The biggest advantage of the hardware is that the Vector Units can be programmed to do whatever you wish. Vertex transformation



Sony's forthcoming EyeToy peripheral and its related software make surprisingly extensive use of the PS2 Emotion Engine because of the complex video manipulation required. Other multimedia apps are expected

and lighting, particle creation and motion, physics simulation, raytracing, audio mixing, game mechanics – the list goes on," says Jester's Steve Humphries. "On the other hand, that's also the disadvantage. The low-level parallel nature of the machine means a lot of programming time and effort needs to be spent making sure that all the various processors are fed the right data in the right order at the right time. A single error can have a massive knock-on effect."

But as **Tony Eden** from Warthog notes, it's not just game code that has to be optimised to get the most out of the system. "Ultimately, it comes down to cleaner, lower-overhead data," he explains. "Unfortunately this means educating art teams and producing tools to help them, which takes time."

### Moving forward

Other, more abstract areas of research are also being explored in order to get the most out of the machine. One coming to the fore is what's known as procedural geometry. This technique uses algorithms to generate smooth, physics-friendly terrains. Its advantage is it only requires a small amount of data to be processed to create a large amount of onscreen scenery. This makes it ideal for PlayStation2, which is generally limited by CPU resources rather than the huge rendering capacity of the Graphics Synthesiser.

Games that have used the technique include EA's SSX series, Evolution Studios' *World Championship Rally* and Eutechnyx's *Big Mutha Truckers*. "We hope to push game performance significantly by continuing to do specific PS2 R&D, particularly with respect to making more use of the procedural geometry ability of the Vector Units," predicts **Andrew Perella**, Eutechnyx's head of programming. "As an example, we're able to have perfectly smooth bends on our racing tracks as opposed to the '50 pence piece' effect seen in so many games." Other items the technique can be applied to include fractal objects such as trees.

For Paul Holman, however, the game he thinks is using the hardware in the most imaginative manner is Sony London's EyeToy (see 'Facing The Camera', p12). Based on research from Sony Computer Entertainment America, it integrates computer-generated characters with a live video feed and motion-recognition input from a USB camera to create a new gaming experience. "EyeToy is doing some very interesting things with relation to video manipulation in real time using the Emotion Engine," he points out. "The reason is the extra multimedia instructions included in the CPU's design. Not many titles have exploited them yet, but hopefully EyeToy will show something completely new."



# Under the bonnet

Respect for warranty means **Equip** doesn't recommend you take your PS2 apart, so here's one we prepared earlier in order to reveal its four key components

## Emotion Engine

Perhaps the smartest decision Sony's marketing department ever made was naming PS2's CPU the Emotion Engine. Evocative of gaming raised to another level, many journalists just couldn't help themselves when it came to reporting on this new piece of technology that would 'allow developers to model such naturalistic images as the bounce of a ball, the lurch of a speeding car or the movement of wind-blown human hair'. The truth, however, is less prosaic.

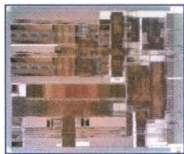
The Emotion Engine is a large piece of 0.18-micron silicon which contains multiple processors manufactured on a single die. There are four main processors. At the core sits a relatively off-the-shelf 128bit MIPS III processor, which also contains some MIPS IV technology as well as custom multimedia instructions (MMI). It has three small caches: an 8Kb data cache, a 16Kb instruction cache and a high-speed 16Kb scratchpad. What makes it more interesting however is its two coprocessors: one is a floating-point processor, which is connected by a dedicated 128bit bus and consists of ten floating-point registers each of which can carry out a 32bit operation per clock cycle; the other is the first of the PlayStation2's 128bit Vector Units. Called VU0, this is connected to the core with another 128bit bus and has a 4Kb data cache and a 4Kb instruction cache. Because it is closely coupled to the core CPU, VU0 is generally used to carry out CPU-type processing tasks such as physics and AI.

In contrast, the other Vector Unit, VU1, doesn't have a direct link to the core. Instead it links directly to the Graphics Synthesiser via the Graphics Interface (GIF). This makes VU1 suited for transform processing, which is one of the key steps for setting up data for processing in the GS. For this reason, VU1 has larger caches than its neighbour: a 16Kb data cache and a 16Kb instruction cache.

Other elements of the Emotion Engine include: a ten-channel Direct Memory Access Controller (DMAC), which is a crucial component ensuring all processors work efficiently – it handles the data transfer between the main 32Mb of system memory and each processor; the Image Processor Unit (IPU), which decodes MPEG2 streams for DVD playback; a timing unit; and the Sound Interface (SIF), which links the EE with the PlayStation2 sound processor, SPU2.

## Graphics Synthesiser

Connected to the Emotion Engine by a 64bit bus, the two main elements of the Graphics Synthesiser are its 4MB of Rambus memory and its huge 2,560bit-wide data bus. The result is a massively parallel rendering engine which can handle very high pixel fill rates. The reason for this startling performance despite the seeming lack of memory is because the RAM is situated on the chip rather than being accessed via an off-chip bus, as is the case with standard PC graphics cards. Surprisingly for such a key component, Sony prefers not to reveal the secrets behind the GS, focusing attention instead on the Emotion Engine.



## Input/Output Processor

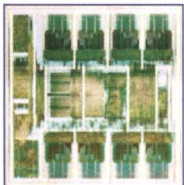
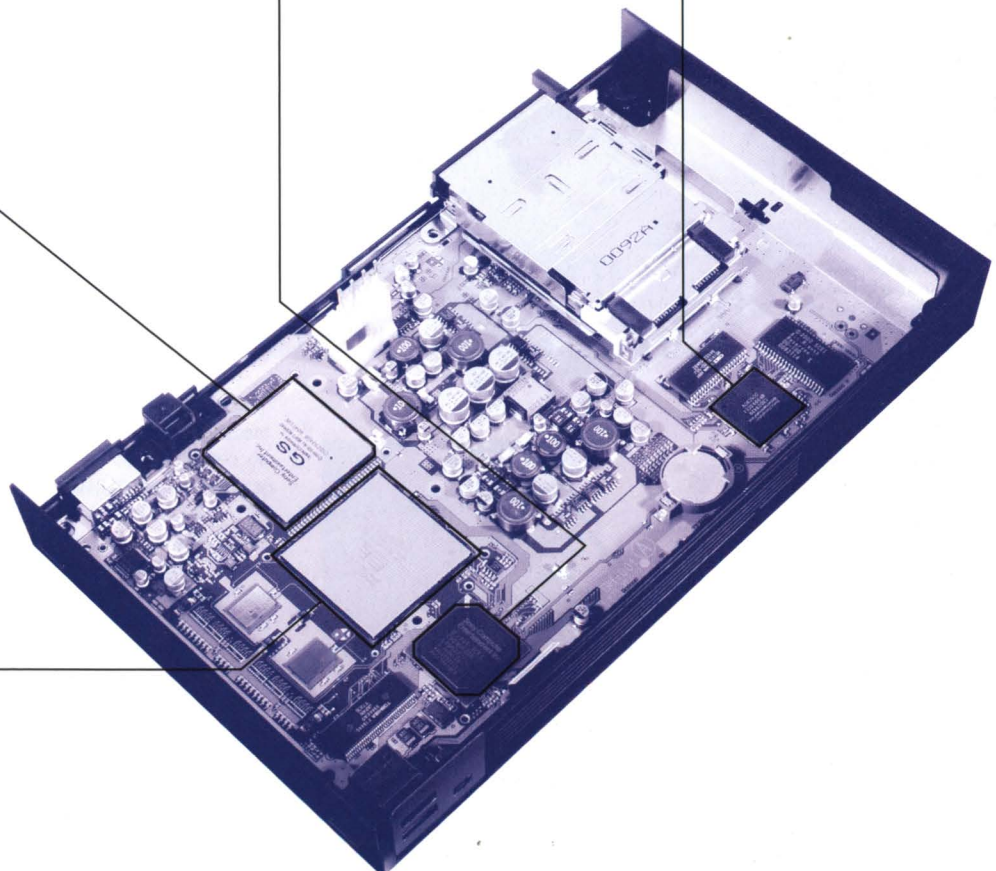
The I/OP is a multifunctional chip that handles everything from peripherals and memory cards to the PlayStation2's USB and i.Link ports through to its backwards compatibility with respect to PSone. For this reason, its core is a modified version of the MIPS R3000 core (with improved bandwidth and cache performance) that powered the original PSone. Interestingly, it can work at two different frequencies – the original 33.8688MHz of the PSone or 36.864MHz. These are selectable depending on which mode the I/OP is operating in. It also has access to 2MB of off-chip RAM, which is the same amount as the original PSone. This means the processing associated with controllers doesn't impact upon the Emotion Engine's performance.

Another aspect of the I/OP that is becoming increasingly apparent is its handling of the PlayStation2's connectivity, as it runs the TCP/IP stacks used to take the console online.

## Sound Processing Unit

Crudely put, the PlayStation2's sound chip consists of two PSone sound chips combined with some extra on-chip RAM thrown in for good measure – maybe that's why Sony refers to it as the SPU2. The two digital signal processing cores, together with their 2Mb of memory, can handle 48 channels of DAT-quality sound, but the big jump for PlayStation2 over its predecessor is the inclusion of an optical digital output, allowing it to feed Dolby or DTS 5.1 surround sound to home entertainment systems, at least in non-interactive scenes.

Other bells and whistles include the ability to stream multiple audio streams from DVD in real time.





# The trouble with conversions

One of the big knock-on effects of PS2's architecture is experienced when a developer tries to port a game to another platform – as VIS discovered with *State Of Emergency*

## Converting the difference

One of the major bugbears for European gamers is the issue of NTSC-to-PAL conversions. NTSC is the TV standard used in North America and Japan. The European PAL TV standard consists of 625 scan lines and runs at 25fps (which, because of the way TVs create a picture using interlaced half-frame, is commonly referred to 50Hz). In contrast NTSC is only made up of only 525 lines and runs at 30fps (or 60Hz). This means games developed for NTSC systems run at higher frequency in a smaller screen area than PAL. Consequently, the simplest way to convert a game from NTSC to PAL is to drop the frame rate and letterbox the screen by 50 lines top and bottom to account for the dead scan lines. As the majority of PlayStation2 games originate from NTSC areas, conversion – or the lack of – is one of reasons for the continuing strength of the grey import market.

According to Paul Holman, vice president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's technology group, however, it all comes down to developers thinking about conversion early in the development process. "The two TV standards impose different issues in terms of the way you lay out your video RAM," he explains. "If you consider you're going to do a PAL conversion from the outset, you can make allowances, and you don't have any problems. However, if developers focus on NTSC, it's a real challenge to move to PAL once a game is underway. I think it's human nature to design for what you experience on a daily basis."

But as he also points out, the TV frequency issue, at least, is much less of a problem in Europe than it used to be. "That's been a big shift over the last five years," he continues. "When we launched PSone, most PAL TVs only ran at 50Hz and most people connected to them via RF. SCART connections have become more common and almost all new TVs now have a 60Hz option."

But it's not just TV standards that can cause confusion between territories. "One issue we're trying to educate Japanese developers about at the moment is making sure they understand that European broadband bandwidth isn't the same as Japanese bandwidth," says Holman. "In parts of Tokyo, they get 6 or 8 MB/s. We're have to warn them that, in Europe, for us broadband is a 512K connection."

An interesting insight into the issues of programming PS2 was provided by a lecture given by VIS Entertainment's Jonathan Dobson and Peter Brace at the 2003 Game Developers Conference in San Jose. Entitled 'Porting a PS2centric Game to the Xbox: A Case Study of *State Of Emergency*', it detailed the challenges of trying to map the specific requirements of PS2's code on to a more general-purpose game console architecture.

The biggest obstacle encountered was *State Of Emergency*'s underlying rendering and animation code, which consisted of 5,000 lines of hand-written Vector Unit assembly code.

This was designed to push as much character animation as possible on the Vector Units, freeing up the Emotion Engine core to carry out the heavy-duty task of AI and routefinding calculations in parallel with the animation. Vis also took a novel approach to art data, using an offline exporter which converted game geometry from Maya into a format that would be sent direct by the Emotion Engine's DMA engine into the Vector Units. The result was a game which could handle a hundred onscreen characters simultaneously.

The process of trying to port this optimised code to Xbox was, unsurprisingly, an intricate one. The main step was writing a new



Though its subject matter is hardly anything to write home about, *State Of Emergency* used reams of code specifically crafted for the PS2's Vector Units. Unsurprisingly, this created issues for the Xbox conversion



renderer, initially undertaken using Microsoft's DirectX development API. This took about three months. The performance of the initial playable version was very disappointing, however. It had been assumed that the power of Xbox would mean this implementation was at least as fast as the PlayStation2. This wasn't the case, however, with the Xbox version suffering from severe frame rate issues.

Closer examination of the problem revealed that while the PS2 performance was gained by balancing the load between the Emotion Engine core and the Vector Units to maximise parallelism, this approach just didn't work on the more conventional Xbox.

Rendering a scene, in particular, took much longer on Xbox, resulting in a system bottleneck in the CPU. In contrast, the bottleneck on PlayStation2 was the AI processing, not the rendering. The main step taken to improve the Xbox version's performance was to ditch DirectX and instead optimise the renderer at a much lower level. Ironically, this is the sort of approach Microsoft's console was designed not to require. Another optimisation used the Xbox's large caches to handle character animation. The final result sees the Xbox version of *State Of Emergency* run at around twice the frame rate of the original PS2 game.

## Turning PlayStation2 into a PC

The most surprising transmogrification of PlayStation2 has been into a Linux-based desktop computer



The PS2 Linux kit offers enthusiasts a cheap desktop system as well as the opportunity to get to grips with the underlying software

While the PS2's launch triggered plenty of speculation about Sony's plans to spin it out as a home gateway-cum-desktop system, it's ironic that the only example of such thinking has been the release of a Linux kit – hardly the stuff of which global domination is made. And, in fact, it's hard to think up anything less calculated than the story behind its release.

The popularity of Linux in Japan is well recognised – it is, for example, the default operating environment for PS2 development – so it perhaps wasn't surprising when an internal Sony team decided to see if they could port a version of the OS to work on the console (combined, of course, with its hard

drive and broadband adaptor combo). The result was subsequently released and has sold around 9,000 units in Japan. There was, however, no plans to release it outside of its native territory. It was only the result of a patient yet vocal campaign from Linux enthusiasts in the US and Europe that persuaded Sony to widen the distribution.

Since then around 2,000 Linux kits – consisting of a 40Gb hard drive, network adaptor, keyboard, mouse, monitor cable and development manual – have been shipped into Europe. Priced at €250 plus VAT and delivery, it is only available via [www.playstation2-linux.com](http://www.playstation2-linux.com).



# Analyse this

The release of the Performance Analyser will enable developers to really get to grips with PlayStation2

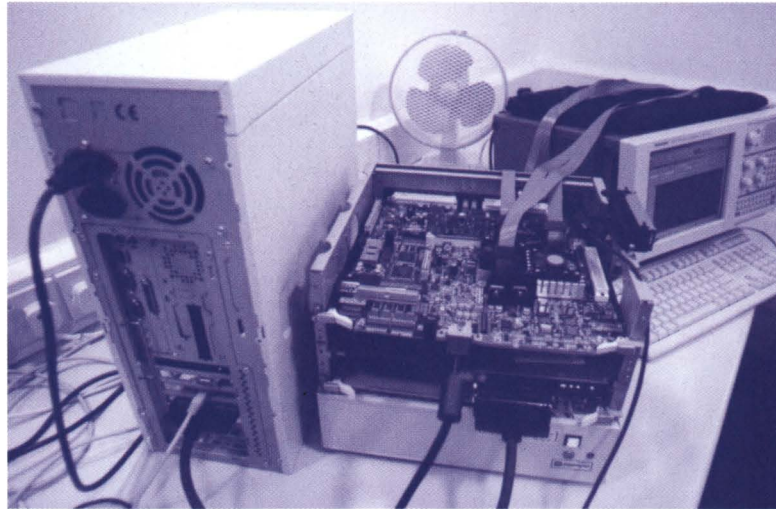
**I**f there's one thing harder than programming the various processors which make up the Emotion Engine, it's debugging and optimising that code. Although various thirdparty software solutions have been available since the console's launch, these are slow and require extra code to be written into the game executable. That's why Sony's PlayStation2 Performance Analyser has been such an anticipated piece of equipment. Simply explained, it allows developers to run their unaltered game code on PlayStation2 hardware and graphically shows them the flow of information through the Emotion Engine's various processors and memory caches.

"We used it on *Battle Engine Aquila* and the massive quantities of data the Analyser provides are invaluable in looking inside the PS2's 'black box' and seeing where performance is suffering," says Lost Toys' **Ben Carter**. "And particularly for titles which are bound by the Vector Units or the Graphics Synthesiser (as opposed to the speed of the CPU), the Analyser represents the only surefire way to find out what is actually going on in those parts of the system, and hence track potential problems."

Developers first got access to a very early version of the Performance Analyser at the end of 2001, but, because there was only one very expensive prototype version per Sony territory, it didn't have much impact on the overall quality of PS2 software. Since then, access has become slightly easier, but most developers have still had to bring their code into Sony's London offices to get it tested. Since the start of 2003, though, some developers have been loaned equipment for a week's testing at a time.

"It would be nice to have something like the Performance Analyser available as soon as possible but it comes down to a question of price," Paul Holman at SCE points out. "The first prototype version used a logic analyser, which cost about £200,000. So we could have released a version to developers at an early stage but it would have cost an absolute fortune. Obviously, we've had to create something affordable."

But the long wait is finally over. First shown at the 2003 Game Developers Conference, the functions of the Performance Analyser have now been integrated into the form of the standard PlayStation2 TOOL devkit. Pricing is yet to be announced but it's



expected that the PA-enhanced TOOL (specification number DTL-T15000) will be only slightly more expensive than the standard vanilla TOOL.

"What we expect is for most companies to buy one straight away, probably on a per-team basis," says Holman. "But over time, it will become the standard development kit. That's certainly what happened with the PSone version."

And that's when the real impact of the Performance Analyser will be realised. "It's a fantastic piece of kit," reckons Mucky Foot's Mike Diskett. "When we can actually have one all the time instead of the occasional week, it's going to double the performance we can get out of PlayStation2."

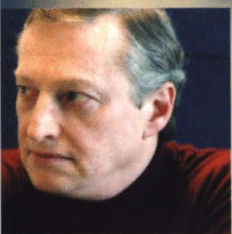
**Mike Healey**, a senior programmer at Rebellion, also thinks it will have a significant effect. "Using it makes it easier to tune code both on a high level from the point of view of balancing the load on the different processors, and at the low level where you make sure that your code is making best use of the relatively small code and data caches," he says. "I think it will yield major improvements in performance – we can look forward to much more visually stunning games in the very near future."



In its original iteration (top) the Performance Analyser consisted of a super-expensive logic analyser and a modified PS2. A year on, and the PA appears at GDC 2002 as a tidier unit (above). The final version (left) looks like a standard TOOL machine. The graphical extravaganzas of SCE's *Primal* (top right) were made possible after extensive sessions with a Performance Analyser

"The first prototype version used a logic analyser, which itself was £200,000. We could have released it but it would have cost a fortune"





Interview:

# Chris Deering

The boss of SCEE has been around the block a few times, but he has never enjoyed such an enviable position as the one he occupies today. **Equip** grilled him on his vision for the growth of PS2 entertainment

**C**hris Deering isn't your average besuited videogame company executive. Sure, he's prone to bouts of corporatespeak, and he's typically reluctant to share his views on his competitors' performance – at least not while a device is recording his voice. But he's also an accomplished pianist, as visitors to Millia will attest, having been treated to his impromptu ivory-tickling in the bar of one of Cannes' plushiest hotels.

His serious side, though, is just that: serious. As head of SCEE, he has to be, because he wants to win. **Equip** found out a little more about how he plans to do that.





**First, who is the average PS2 user?**

Well, average is kind of a mathematical term – they're all individuals, they're all different – but the average age of a purchaser is 20, 21, and the most typical age of use is around 15. The distribution of ages stops around about eight years old, maybe even younger, and goes up into the 70s, following pretty much the same trajectory as we had with PSone. PSone has a slightly younger skew now, as it's been placed more in the massmarket, the gift market. And the male/female split is around 90/10, but in Japan it's around 70/30. The statistics can be misleading, though, because we know

that a lot of families have PS2s, girlfriends come and play, younger sisters come and play. It's more of a male purchase but the actual usage is more among others than maybe the normal statistics would suggest.

**Is the 90/10 split something you are attempting to address?**

I think it happens over time. At the same stage of the PSone's life there was the same split. And it's gone down to about 80/20 by now, on a nominal basis, although the absolute usage is probably more evenly spread. Gaming has traditionally been slightly more male.

I think most people writing games are male so they tend to write games for males. We have quite a few females in our development group, and there are women writing games in some categories... but I think it's fair to say it's skewed more male than, say, *The Sims Online*.

**The EyeToy project looks to be aimed at a broader group than the traditional 18–24 male demographic.**

It seems to capture the imagination of anybody who gets exposure to it, including quite young kids, particularly if there's a moderator who can bring them in, explain

how to use it, make them feel relaxed. We try to aim products, but in some respects the games evolve out of creative centres, and in the case of PSone we were after a particular product with *Spice World*, and Konami's had very big success with its dancemat games with women.

We don't try to aim at octogenarians, but we try to fill product categories with traditional genres, and work on new concept genres. As technology evolves it's possible to do more things, get a more realistic film-like experience, and I think if you trace how games have evolved from the earliest time, they were virtually 100 per



cent gameplay, there wasn't much else you could do on the screen. And then over time interactive entertainment broadened out, because it delivered something more familiar to people who listened to music and watched films.

So we're always working on the expansion of appeal, and to reach out to broader audiences, and over time this has occurred. We're very conscious of it, and we try very hard to push the envelope.

#### **How important is Sony is pushing at technical and gameplay concept limits?**

Gaming has always been about expression – it's not linear, passively viewed content – and as the capabilities of the equipment and software has enabled a more varied experience – 3D roaming, sound that is CD quality, cut sequences that look like films, and more and more in-game play that looks like big-screen entertainment – this is always going to add credibility and bring in people that might have been put off by what gaming used to be in the early days.

History has shown that this does occur, and fortunately in the case of PSone the CD audio side helped a lot, the 3D graphics helped a lot, and now with PS2 the ability to free roam has been a factor in a lot of successful games because it's something that wasn't available very much. I think *Mario 64* introduced the concept – but as more games take advantage of these features, the audience that it can attract expands. We get excited about it because it makes the future brighter.

#### **If PSone represented the first step into 3D, and PS2 expanded on that, where does PS3 take us?**

Well, we're not really commenting on next-gen activity. There have been some public announcements of joint ventures on chip design, etc, but just taking an observation over many years, decades, no doubt future generations will have better resolution and freedom in more directions. But I'd think there's still a huge amount of potential in PS2. If you look at the early PSone games like *Ridge Racer* – sitting in 2Mb of memory, driving around a track which, at the time, looked very arcade-like – and then compare that with *GT2* for example which was a 3.5-generation game...

As these systems mature, and the tools available, like the Performance Analyser, get familiar to more and more creative centres,

the true potential of the hardware can be accessed. Our Performance Analyser, even in some of our most successful games like the *GT* franchise, *The Getaway* and *GTA*, is showing there's still a huge amount of headroom to be explored in terms of what the technology can deliver. And I think that will provide room for new concepts for the rest of the PS2's lifespan.

#### **Can you quantify that lifespan?**

I can comment looking backwards, and looking forwards obviously there are some highly confidential aspects. There were at least five years between the PSone and PS2. There were at least three years between PSone and the 16bit consoles. As the technology gets more ambitious, there are more and more aspects that need to be honed. Inevitably there are development tools and other aspects that come into it – it's not just about putting together specs and building components. So there are new technologies on the map that have been discussed, and when there's something specific to talk about on that subject I'm sure, as Phil Harrison said, that you'll be the first to know.

#### **How important is online gaming to you?**

Well, we call it network gaming or network computer entertainment. It's extremely important over a continuum. Up to now, platform creators were more or less in control of all of the variables. There's the plug-and-play experience, there's the QA aspects, there's concept approval, there's debugging. But the use of the single medium, cartridge or disk, made a world that was easy to measure and map. With networking you have a new element, the connectivity, the number of people who are on, who can afford to be on, and the quality of line they're on. Now that's going to move very quickly – the adoption rates of broadband are picking up fast, it's becoming more affordable, although it's still a bit expensive for the massmarket – and as the tentacles go out, and always-on, reasonably fast broadband starts to become ubiquitous it'll become more and more important.

With the Dreamcast's narrowband connectivity there were some fun things that could be done, but the number of people who got involved was relatively small compared with the installed base. We've had visibility now from the US and the





Network Adapter over there, the fact that they sold over half a million connectors, and the adoption rate for games like *Madden* and *SOCOM* suggests that there's a bright future for network gaming. We think it's a way of enhancing existing game concepts and pushing the envelope on new game concepts, and also bringing different types of entertainment to the people with the machines that may well go beyond gaming. But we want them all to be fun; PlayStation stands for fun, for reliability.

We're very conscious of that heritage, and we're trying to accelerate the adoption of a wide range of broadband homes. But we can't be in control of that aspect completely – it'll vary by country, it'll vary by city, it'll vary whether the caller's online via cable or DSL, it'll vary how far they are from a switch, but primarily it'll vary on how competitive the pricing is for always-on, all-you-can-eat broadband. True broadband, in order to deliver something closer to the dream of computer entertainment, really has to get up to, you know, over... over 1Mb per second at least, and ideally more like 10, 20, 30, or – as they have in Iceland, I think – 100Mb per second.

So we're at an exciting stage of what will become taken for granted by our kids, and maybe before that. It's somewhat early days, though, and we have to be realistic about that. You can't play PlayStation unless you have a TV, and

fighting games and driving games, and take great note of the ones that take my time, but I don't have the time to get very good at them. My kids are, but I'm not.

**Do you think you learn more from watching people or playing yourself?**

I think you learn more from playing yourself if you have the time. But we have such a good resource of people between our tech support group, our QA group, our development teams and our marketing teams, and great information and objective reviews from magazines such as your own and... others...

I think understanding what is going to work and what might not is an acquired skill, which definitely includes being able to play and being a gamer. But not necessarily only a hardcore gamer, because what we're trying to do is attract – well, you can see from *EyeToy*, it's fun just to watch people getting a first experience from that, and they may have never played a game in their lives. So we also need to keep a balance between remaining a challenge to the hardcore, and not putting off potential future customers.

**What do you learn from watching your competitors in the hardware market?**

I think you need to learn from everything that's going on in the world around you. We have a very good network of official

say, "Yes, they've done that well," or, "No, we'd have done that differently."

Well, I don't really want to comment on competitors' tactics or strategies. You can get that from them better than you can from me. I think there are some differences in philosophy. We are more open in terms of what the possibilities are for content providers. We're not requiring that we deliver the content, we're not requiring that we own the relationship with the consumer, we're not requiring that we bill the consumer where billing is relevant.

*EverQuest*, as you know, is coming to PS2, and the *EverQuest* company will do its own billing. We do offer hosting in Europe, but we don't require that we host. I think that our success has been based, right from the beginning, in encouraging individuality and freedom of activity among the people who want to create and paint on the palette. We provide a mechanism through which creatives can reach consumers with content – game content with lots of interactivity, some of it with less but more experiential aspects.

We know there are some features of online gaming that are helpful; mediation, moderation, communities. We know that those aspects are helpful to people, but we don't necessarily require that's the only way you can play, that all content providers conform to our view of the world. And we think our philosophy is more conducive to

"The Performance Analyser shows there's still a huge amount of headroom to be explored. And I think that will provide room for new concepts for the rest of the PS2's lifespan"

you can't have a TV unless you have electricity, but we're very much committed to network connectivity.

**Do you play games?**

I started gaming when I was at Atari back in the '80s. I do play a bit – I like driving games, I like to watch people playing games, and I know a lot about what makes games work and not work, what the elements of trade-offs are on the programming side, but I don't have as much time to take on the challenge of the new generation of games, which sometimes require 25–40 hours to finish.

I'm a big fan of traditional genres like

information, and people in stores, interviews and reviews, and forums on the Website.

**Presumably you've been watching Microsoft's online activity very closely.**

Well, we've been watching the emergence of network gaming, including in the beginning with PlayStation in Japan last June, and then what occurred at E3 and the launch of the Network Adapter in the US, and our own plans are well underway as has previously been announced. Everything's progressing according to plan.

**So there's nothing you could pick out from Xbox Live about which you could**

success, and we'll see what happens. It's certainly worked for us up to now.

**How well has the Broadband Adapter done in the US?**

It's done as expected, and it probably could have done better if the reality of supply constraints didn't inevitably kick in. But it's certainly been on plan and above plan.

**It's really hard to sell an add-on, right?**

Well, I think, as it's been disclosed in the US, to go online on competitors' machines you still have to make a purchase of some kind. To play a DVD on a competitor's machine you've still got to make a



purchase. I think Dreamcast was the only machine that was really network ready out of the box.

**Xbox is network ready out of the box.**

Well, that may be... I'm not familiar with each and every case, but I know in the US it's \$49 (£31) with the adapter, and maybe arrangements can be made with the service providers to subsidise that.

**Phil Harrison claims that the industry will undergo a revolution in the next five years, particularly in terms of software distribution.**

I think there's going to be a much broader definition of... well, if you want to call it gaming, but certainly network computer entertainment. Partly made feasible by the headset that we have with *SOCOM*, or the camera that we have with *EyeToy*. *EyeToy* can be played without being online, *SOCOM* can be played without being online, you could have a great experience online if that's something you want to do that day. There'll be some games that are online exclusive, like *EverQuest*. I think most online games will be very fun and exciting on their own, but with dimensions available for those who are connected, so inclined, and we'll see how it goes. It's definitely a step along the road to the ultimate grid computing that's been referred to in some

**Can you tell us about the concepts? That's what we're interested in.**

Well, I don't want to comment on specific titles, but... the ability to... provide a new level in a reasonably short period of time, for a game you already own, or a reward sequence in the form of a video clip that can be presented in a reasonable period of time to a lot of people at the same time, to have people be able to see each other when they're playing against each other, even though they're not in the same room, same town, same country.

As to the final execution of these things, that will come from the brilliant minds of the people who create the games – designers, programmers, artists. I'm talking kind of figuratively when I speak of these things; there are plenty of futurists who'll tell you more about what might be possible. Having said all of that, I'll come back to the point I made earlier about the capabilities of PS2 as a home media centre. Quite coincidentally it's the number one DVD player in the world, although that hasn't had any effect on the tie-in ratio. And where there is a social situation around a TV set in a living room environment, there are all kinds of things that can be done with the power of PS2 – it's just a question of how many people can be linked.

It's going to be a great experience for those who can be linked, and for those who

that it caught them by surprise. We saw it in development way back in 2000, and were excited about some of the new experiences it provided. People like to express themselves, so rather than being on rails, like most games are literally or figuratively, games that enable you to do what you want to do, even if it's not necessarily immediately towards completion of a level, uh, they expand freedom, and to some extent they're anarchy. Anarchy in a positive sense – gaming as a means of expression, as opposed to just impression. So the capability of PS2 to make that kind of game possible, it came to fruition in the delivery of that feature, and has obviously been appreciated greatly with *GTAIII*, and even more so with *Vice City*.

Quite often reviewers tend to focus on one part of the experience, but the success or failure of a game commercially – as with films – can be completely different from what reviewers are focusing on. It's the total experience, and when you're in the business of delivering entertainment, sometimes you get surprised. Sometimes you expect success, and you plan for success and it happens, and sometimes you plan for success and it doesn't quite happen, it's a bit of magic.

**If Microsoft had ended up with *GTAIII*, would things have been very different?**

“It's not essential to have every conceivable great product, but it is essential to have a repertoire of great products, and that's what we strive for, and so far we've been able to obtain that”

releases, and if you just look at how the Internet has progressed over the last ten years, and simulate in your mind some of the things that might occur with network game machines going forward...

**You allude to this magical exciting universe, but the descriptions you're using are so vague. Do you have any clear, distinct idea of the possibilities going forward? Are there any specific visions of the future of PlayStation?**

Well, if everybody with a phoneline had a 10Mb all-you-can-eat broadband service, that would accelerate considerably our ability to explore the concepts that come to mind. In reality that's not the case.

can't, for those who are not ready, or not able to afford, well, *GT4*'s coming, *EyeToy*'s coming, and they're really pushing the envelope in terms of concept design. I don't know if Phil Harrison mentioned to you *Dog's Tale*, or *Ghost Hunter*, *Kill Zone*, or... you know, we're just seeing *Vice City* and *The Getaway* and *Primal*, we're just sort of moving into late morning in the lifecycle of what can be done in PS2.

**How important have *GTAIII* and *Vice City* been to PS2's success?**

Well, *GTA* is one of those defining titles. Every platform inevitably has one. And I think it caught a lot of people by surprise, frankly. I think *Take 2* would probably admit

That's kind of a hypothetical question. It's fair to say that games are what people buy machines to play, they don't buy them as doorstops. So a successful platform needs a number of compelling games, immersive, fun, new games to talk about. And every platform has had one or two, so I think that it's possible... uh... it's not essential to have every conceivable great product, but it is essential to have a repertoire of great products, and that's what we strive for, and so far we've been fortunate enough to obtain that.

**So what are the PS2's essential titles?**

I could name them based on the volumes that they did, but I think the real first killer







app for PS2 was *GT3*. *Metal Gear Solid* was shown at the introduction, *FFX* has been a major title, *Tekken Tag* has been a major title, our own *WRC*. There have been quite a few 'tent poles', but also a nice range of in-betweens. Some are reconstituted dependable genres with a following, and then some new genres, new twists to old genres, and hopefully in the future there'll be some more new ones too.

**Does it upset you when a game such as *Ico* or *Rez*, so critically acclaimed, ends up being a commercial failure?**

It's disappointing, but sometimes things run into traffic, sometimes there's been insufficient promotion or publicity, sometimes no matter how technically superb something might be it just doesn't click with the audience. *Ico* was reasonably successful – it's disappointing it didn't do better, but there's a sequel coming that I think that's going to do very well. *Rez* is more in the music category, and I think you can bookend that as a subset of the market. And *Music* from Codemasters was a great title too. It did better than *Rez*. It's in that category – like hockey games, or pinball games, or certain kinds of puzzle games. There's always the exception that breaks the rule, though, and we love it when that happens.

***Frequency* is another one that's come internally from Sony – do you think that Sony doesn't receive the recognition it maybe deserves for innovating?**

Uh, well, coming from an extremely professional and highly knowledgeable publication like **Edge**, I can see how you would draw that inference. The reality of the market place is that the average family with a PlayStation doesn't have a clue. They might have seen some ads for EA Sports, and they know that Sega used to have the Mega Drive, but they don't really know that this game is firstparty or thirdparty – they're just absorbing everything, and they know what they like to play. It's our responsibility as a platform holder to try to demonstrate the full range of capabilities, to look for niches and to be willing to take risks, and to make the market better for everyone who plays and participates in a business sense. To that extent, I think you might be right to say that we don't get enough credit, but it's not something consumers or retailers are concerned about.



But we do set out to try and do things. We had *Vib Ribbon* on the PSone, I don't know if you remember that... a brilliant black-and-white game, technically and creatively, but it's going to have... well, as with experimental genres of films and novels and music they're not necessarily going to appeal to the masses overnight. *IQ* was a great game out of Japan, firstparty, but it did puzzle game kinds of numbers.

**In the early '80s people played Atari – the brand was synonymous with games. In the late '80s, early '90s, they played Nintendo. Now they play PlayStation, but how are you going to stop people from**

There are ways to deal with positioning and branding, it's just a matter of keeping things fresh, keeping things young, and making sure the tribes don't run off to wear a different football shirt, because they don't want to use the same things their older brothers did. A lot of the time they do, though, and I think our backwards compatibility was probably the single most advantageous thing in terms of success in round two, and I have no information or indication to expect that that notion won't be part of our religion going forward. I think it's possible, and probable, but you have to earn your stripes every day, and competition is a good thing. It's nice to be number one, but it's more important to be challenged.

to surpass our installed base, I don't think that's very arrogant. But it's not always about throwing something new on the market. What we do is build a totally integrated system with an application in mind, not just throw together off-the-shelf bits and pieces, and then dangle specs about the number of cylinders in the car, or gears in the transmission.

We design with a great deal of deliberation and expectation of generation one, two and three games – an entire lifecycle of the production of games. And we are, I'm quite sure, further ahead on the holistic issue of maintaining leadership in future system design as anyone else, it's just not the right time to

**Can you see the PS2 going the same way as the PSone – repositioning, etc?** If you take all of the PAL TV countries, the number two selling console is still the PSone. It never really got repositioned. We didn't spraypaint it pink and call it the LadyStation. It's still the PlayStation, and it's still a great entry-level machine for people, more casual gamers, or as a gift product. What did happen is after five years or so, technology allowed for it to be miniaturised, and cost reduced further, so now you can get it for £49, €89, and that kind of activity you might expect over a similar time frame. But I don't think positioning is the right word, no.

**What do you tell people you do?**

I say I work for PlayStation and I look after the PAL territories.

**And how do they react?**

They say, "My son would sure like to meet you!" Or, "Wow, that must be a really fun job." And it is. I think it must be one of the most exciting jobs you could possibly imagine, apart from Ken Kutaragi's job, which is even more fun. But I think our creative team is unsurpassed, if not unmatched, within Sony, and that's a great feeling of accomplishment. And that lets us drive some more initiatives, such as EyeToy, and bring new kinds of entertainment to the rest of the world.

**You have all these development teams. You believe them to be the finest in the world. So what do you want to make with them? What's your vision?**

I'd like to see... truly innovative products that are educational as well as entertaining. I think PlayStation defined itself as unexpected fun – that's one way to describe it. Another way is, "We're definitely not a WorkStation."

Our dreams come from entertainment, and therefore we have the opportunity to bring technology to bear to enhance humanity. There's something maudlin about that, but there's an unfilled, but tremendously exciting market in taking things like the National Geographic Channel, The Discovery Channel, and bringing them to life in a situation where the consumer can express themselves as well as absorb. And the bits and pieces of that technology are now coming into distant focus.

**"The PSone never really got repositioned. We didn't spraypaint it pink and call it the LadyStation. It's still the PlayStation, and it's still a great entry-level machine for people"**

**'playing Microsoft' or 'playing Nokia' or whatever in five years' time?**

Well, I think, personally, having been part of the industry for all of that period, I'm more than aware of the difficulty of putting together two platforms in a row. So the challenge, and the excitement, of continuing that is part of the fun. I think there are some fundamentals that are kind of new to the industry this time around – as the content broadens, and as the variety of input devices broadens, having the benefit of Sony's understanding of entertainment in music and films and of music production and film production is an asset. Having the understanding of chip design, chip manufacturing and general consumer electronic distribution, and customer service, are assets.

In order to maintain our leadership role, and to continue surprising people, we kind of stand for unexpected fun, and that's an exciting mantle but it's also a big responsibility. But we work very hard at it, and I think thus far we're on a good track – there are some fundamental business principles that have served us well, like keep checking things because adjustment has served us well. There could be permutations, too: EyeToy is something that works well on a PlayStation, but it could take on its own personality.

**Nintendo and Microsoft, who are both well aware that the battle for this generation is lost, have been talking quite bullishly about their plans for the future. You guys are being very coy about it, and you're going to continue being quiet for the rest of this interview. But Nintendo has said it'll be first out with next-gen hardware – Microsoft has said it'll be coming before you – is that something that interests you at all?**

We're in the real world here. We're in a competitive environment, and we know how the industry has progressed historically. We know that there's interest in these things, and R&D is always going on. I think with respect to future PlayStations there's probably been more publicity on the general direction of that this time around than there certainly was on PS2. But as I said before the gestation period for a successful system... success has many angles. It has to have low cost production, even though it may be high cost in the early stages it has to be on track to move down in production cost. It has to have massive amounts of engineering, and massive amounts of software engineering. It has to get teams equipped and informed.

And so it's not surprising that competitive platforms... I don't want to comment, I'm not sure that the competitors' platforms are necessarily... they're unlikely

talk about these things. And it's not my position to be declaring aspects that haven't been made available by the management of the company.

But I'm not particularly concerned that other companies have mentioned that they're going to be coming to market with other attempts. I mean, Sega's a great company, but I think the way they handled the launch of Saturn, and subsequently the launch of Dreamcast... in some ways... thinking too much about the timing, and not enough about getting the product right. To be where we want to be the ambition is extremely high, and the period of optimisation is correspondingly demanding.

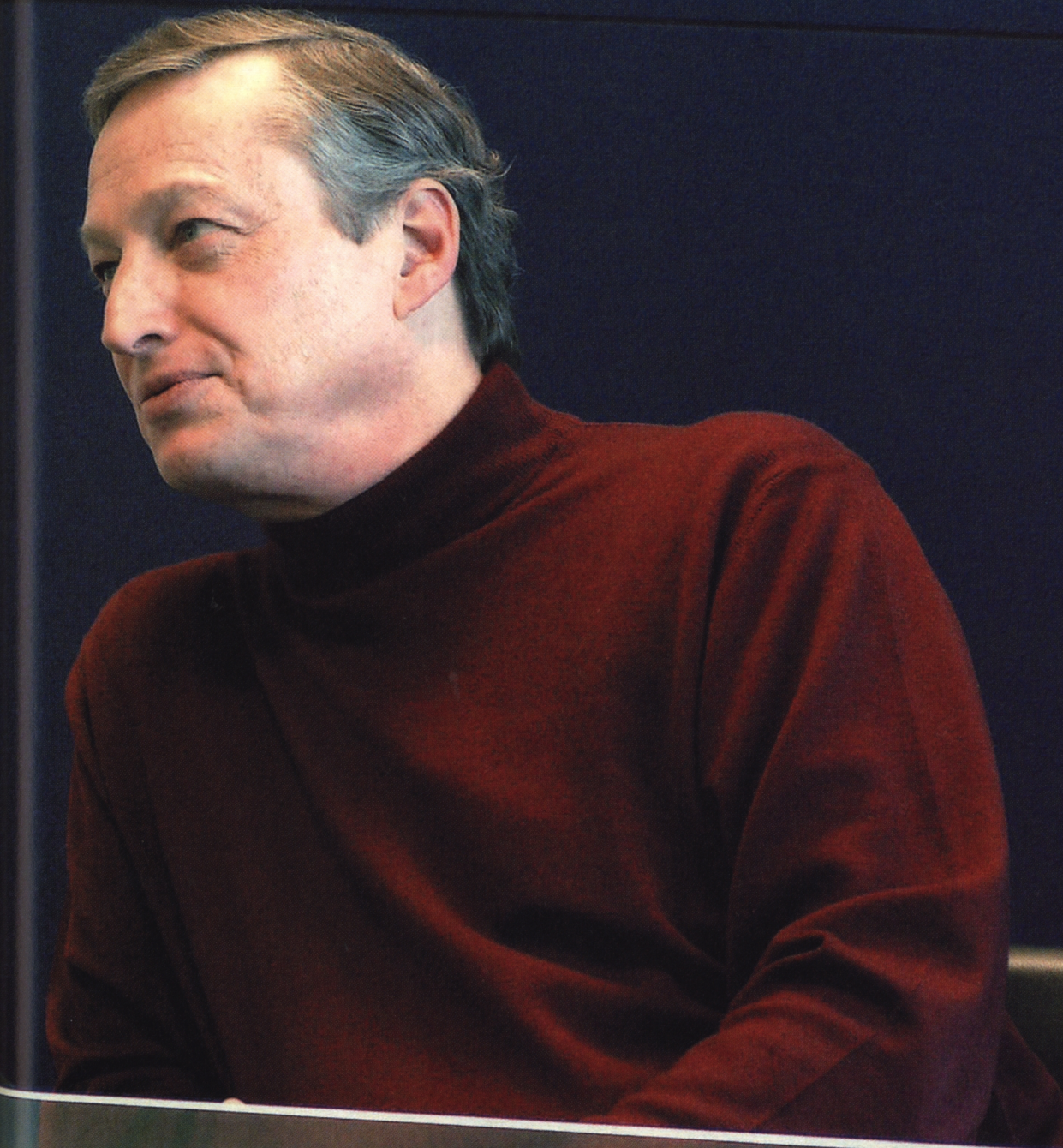
**With that in mind, PS2's ended up with such a huge lead this generation – would you say that indicated the business plan for that model was flawless?**

Heh. No, all companies have unexpected pleasant surprises and unpleasant surprises. If we had to do it again we would have had more supply at the first Christmas. Um, no, I think flawless isn't a real world phrase, particularly when you're in an industry this complex. We've been fortunate enough to have good people – resources in the right areas – and a good heritage, but you have to earn your stripes every day.





interview: chris deering



Photography: Martin Thompson



# Dark Horizons

If cute, cuddly platform games' days really are numbered, just what will replace them on PlayStation2? Well, a look at recent charts suggests that mature content is the way forward. **Equip** examines the appeal of the genre's most successful exponent, *Vice City*, and considers what lies beyond it



**T**he future's dark for PS2. Not the kind of darkness that's used as a cheap programming ruse, to place grimy atmosphere in place of detail and colour, the 'moody' palette of grey/brown dullness that so many games these days seem to come cloaked in. It's a nasty, brutal darkness, as rife with black comedy as it is with disturbing behaviour. Don't worry about the children, though; there's a whole load of genres to keep them distracted, as more saccharine production

values get injected into clichéd game styles in order to keep the parents, the young ones and the licensees happy.

So, what is the source of this darkness? Let's start with the penumbra: *Grand Theft Auto III* made more money than 'Star Wars: Attack of the Clones', and became the best-selling British videogame of all time. The sequel, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, broke even more ground, showing as much disregard for the law of diminishing returns as it did for typically

corporate pressures to attain a lower-than-18 age rating in order to get teenage wallets involved. Woe betided any mainstream videogame magazine that didn't give *GTA: Vice City* its highest possible accolade; *GTAIII* was another matter entirely, obviously, as it harpooned out of nowhere and, while it was a success in both critical and retail terms, didn't hit the dizzy, perpetual high notes of praise and penetration that *Vice City* has managed. If anything, it's the new *Tomb Raider*, and not









With 8.5m units sold to date, *Grand Theft Auto* represents the ten per cent of software accounting for 90 per cent of the money



Two different packages, two different stories. Rockstar's game clearly opts for a more tongue-in-cheek approach, but future games featuring mature content may follow *The Getaway's* more explicit lead

just in lazy terms of PS2 monogamy and annual instalments. It's already graced the cover of priggish style mag 'Sleaze Nation' and, with eyes already cast towards the next GTA iteration, it's only a matter of months before it achieves a recognisable, iconic tag, a marketing buzzword of its own. With 8.5m units sold to date, this is the ten per cent of software making 90 per cent of the money.

#### Genre fusion

*Vice City* doesn't create any new genre – or, at least, not one with any easy lingo to accompany it just yet – but rather fuses together a handful of existing ones and paints it with some dark, sophisticated intelligence. From the retro-homage intro sequence onwards, it's clear that this is something crafted by people who play videogames and aren't embarrassed by their endeavours. *Vice City* may wear some distinctive, film-heavy clothing, but it's not scared to insert structure and consideration into the game experience proper. Is that the major attraction behind the game? That it doesn't talk down to you?

Demographics are idiotic by their very nature, but you are not – it doesn't treat you like a simpering newcomer, incapable of learning new tricks without being prompted, lectured and mollycoddled.

Maybe it's not that; it could be one of several other factors. It could be this: it's as much mainstream as it is leftfield, and as polished as it is slapstick. The style drags you in and snags you; the substance keeps you there before the novelty of surface wears off and disinterested sets in.

Everything puns, lampoons, mocks, sneers, swaggers and satires with a sniper's accuracy, even more so than the films and media that influenced it. It's an unheard of concept: a game that's as truly mature and polished in terms of scripting as a film, or an episode of 'The Simpsons'. Genuinely intelligent scripting – satirical ad jingles worthy of any knowing comedy production – and production values that draw on the tragic kitsch of the '80s with skill, thought and a magpie's eye for capturing a glittering zeitgeist, as opposed to the usual lazy dissections presented in 'I Love 1985'.

Fail a mission and it's not game over, and neither is it a trek back to the hub or mission briefing screen. *Vice City*, and your role within it, continues on regardless, making your decision to re-attempt a conscious, non-





Blowing things up is all part of *Vice City's* appeal, but its accurate '80s pastiche is massively appealing in itself

compulsory one. It makes for a smoother experience, with minimal loading screens to stutter the flow of play. You can mooch around the city streets, indulging in petty whims for petty cash, pursue a series of side missions, or just cruise around to the sound of an '80s megamix of radio stations until something catches your eye. It's not entirely open-ended and non-linear, but it gives a good, functioning illusion of it, just like *Halo's* smoke 'n' mirrors enemy AI. It's enough to get the job done, and get thumbs on sticks.

It's not all colourful neon, however. It's a game with detectable flaws and gaping holes – combat still remains a blunderbuss of chaos, and the variability of play conditions that emerge during some missions create a cut-throat difficulty curve – but when the base fabric is of such refreshing, palpable quality, it still makes for a tremendous garment nonetheless.

### Mockery with panache

'Make Kash, not Kudos' chides the poster for 'Vice Street Racer', a series of illegal races around the streets of Vice City. 'Best Graphics Ever!' proclaims the cover of *Erse*, a suspiciously familiar magazine strewn across the coffee table in Tommy Vercetti's



Ocean Drive hotel room. How come so few games are capable of poking such sharp digs at the industry behind it, and with such savoir faire and panache?

Lead character Tommy Vercetti himself is an anachronism, with more in common with the modern day gamer than the kitsch, neon-drenched world around him. He's riled and mystified by the obsession with giant man-eating sharks that seems to pervade those he deals with in the Movie Studio missions. He's the only one able to cut through the decadence and DayGlo vanity of it all to get to the core of the situation.

Vercetti is as sexy as hell, too; a no-nonsense chase-cutting with nosebleed wit. A chancer in total control, apart from an

endearingly ostentatious fashion sense. He's doing what James Bond could never do in his own videogames and, most importantly, he's not out on a quest to save a world from destruction; he's out to make it his own. You're empowering yourself, as opposed to







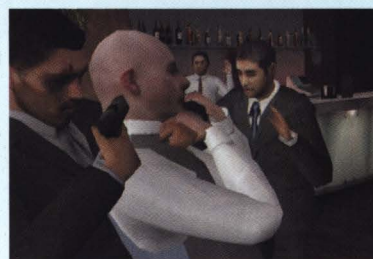
letting fate open up the pathways for you.

The choice soundtrack, too, is a tangible factor in what makes *Vice City* such a tremendous experience; it's not some lazy school disco dot com compilation, but a selection of tunes that tingle with retro/teenage resonance as much as they still sound like excellent pop songs.

"It's not like you're going around collecting fucking magic potions and wizard hats," says Rockstar's **Terry Donovan**, in a disingenuous wolf whistle to the press attempting to explain *Vice City*'s success. But that's only a fractional part of the equation that makes *Vice City* work. The appealing facets are manifold, and they run a gamut that courts everyone from experienced gamers to the mainstream press.

*Tomb Raider* was easy to pigeonhole and label: girl power For Her, a pair of breasts For Him. There's no such easy hook here, and it seems that the press is still fumbling to identify exactly what *Vice City* is, and into what compartment it'll nestle most snugly. However, it will certainly mean them having to idolise something they regularly condemn, lest they miss out on this sweeping cultural phenomenon that can't be all bad, surely, if so many honest, upstanding people are buying to it. Well, they all are just gamers, after all, so no worry there.

The most common pigeonhole into which



While *Vice City*'s dialogue can be risqué at times, the game's content still falls some way short of the graphic excesses evident in *The Getaway*. Now that a benchmark has been set on PS2, watch as others try to push it



*Vice City* has been placed so far has been one of baity and shocking content, but those who have done so have actually hit the nail on part of the head of *Vice City*'s appeal. The leap into 3D was necessary to realise what the earlier flatpack GTA games were hinting at, turning the implicit into the explicit. Something clicked and funnelled the experience into a far more palatable 3D framework. It increased the accessibility tenfold with that reduction in abstraction, and the ease of which we could understand the levity of our actions. So, although the violence is still slapstick, there's an element of realistic tangibility to it. So, how about ultraviolence and genuinely mature – as in sophisticated – content? Say, there's an idea...

### The imperfect crime

*The Getaway*. It shares similar hooks to *Vice*

*City*, and didn't just ride wholesale on its coat-tails, as did the puerile, thumb-dumbing anaesthetic that was *State of Emergency*. It did, however, appear to be GTA spawn as viewed through the eyes of Guy Ritchie. It still owes a debt to the *Driver* series, but it managed to do more than just offer up a whole city for exploration, managing to fuse ideas and styles of play together as *GTAIII* did so masterfully before it. Setting the game in a JPEG-realistic rendition of London is an angle that could reasonably have accounted for *The Getaway* occasionally leapfrogging *Vice City* in weekly sales figures.

Cool violence is swiftly becoming something of a boon, especially to those desperate for an angle to pitch the game in the ostensibly hallowed pages of the lifestyle press. Finally. An excuse for sharp suits, attitude, expletives, bloody imagery and other

**"It's not like you're going around collecting fucking magic potions and wizard hats," says Rockstar's Terry Donovan, in an attempt to explain *Vice City*'s success**







lures to reel in the twentysomething males and their lucrative, disposable income. Not to mention the ample opportunity for sponsorship tie-ins, and other juicy inroads for cross-branding mediascapes, or whatever the hell they call them. It's what happens When Demographics Collide.

Another appeal of *The Getaway* is its obviously British flavour – and not just to Britons. It conforms to the global preconceptions of Britishness, too. It's dark, cool, rugged and – certain vacuous gameplay issues aside – is something distinctly adult, and not in the typically videogame sense of schlock and anodyne scream queen shock tactics, just like *Vice City* – see the pattern emerging? Also, pre-owned 'first edition' copies of *The Getaway*, containing scenes of massacre committed by lead character Mark Hammond disguised as a British Telecom engineer, currently retail for the same RRP as a brand-new copy in branches of Game.

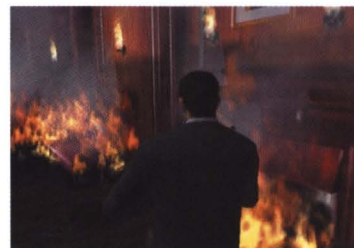
Substance is certainly eclipsed by style in *The Getaway*, but there's enough of it in place to fixate anyone tempted in by the passable mockney accents and capital-based geography of it all. A game developed in the UK can easily go on to global recognition and acclaim, but for one so steeped in limey lore to do so? That would be a coup of sorts.

### Criminal legacies

With *The Getaway* costing £3m to make, and *Vice City* obviously a project requiring the talents of many key people from all facets of the industry, cuckoo publishers are going to have to look long and hard at how to capitalise upon the template set by these two

games, with such giddy financial risks involved. *State of Emergency* can get to the top spot on the strength of its Rockstar branding alone, but it has no hope of staying there past pre-order hysteria and an initial spike of gullible sales. *GTA* has done *GTA* so unerringly well that the smart move is to maybe not ape it at all. But it will establish certain aspects and tendencies that will dictate the content of future software ventures, aimed consciously at an older market. *GTA* manages to balance both substance and style, offering as much fodder and meat for the seasoned player as it does for a limp-thumbed culture vulture. *The Getaway* has a far less elegant balance, proffering more of the latter; does that suggest that style is the driving force behind the sales figures? Until a game like *The Getaway* can leave the shadow of something like *Vice City*, it would suggest that there's definite scope for a tectonic shift in terms of maturity of content, but quality of software is still a deciding, fundamental factor that needs to be present. It becomes an even stronger statement if you add in the strong possibility of *Vice City* aiding and abetting *The Getaway*'s sales curve.

A common feature of both these games,



### Cool violence is swiftly becoming something of a boon, especially to those desperate for an angle to pitch the game in the ostensibly hallowed pages of the lifestyle press

though, is the world within which they're presented. They aren't persistent worlds, as with MM RPGs, but persistent stages for all the in-game acts to be played out upon. It's an important consistency, to draw the player in and make him feel like more of a resident rather than some drifter who's just passing through on a quest to fulfil the whims of fate.

Another common seam is apparent: the lead character is protected by the skewed justice of an underdog avenger, still the most palatable excuse for including dollops of





## INTERVIEW: SCEE LONDON STUDIO

Equip spoke to Chun Wah Kong and Katie Elwood, two of the key creatives behind *The Getaway*, to discuss motivation, controversy, and more...



To what do you attribute the success of *The Getaway*? The violence?

The setting? The attention to detail of the city itself?

Chun Wah Kong: We caused a buzz when we spoke of the game's ambition a couple of years ago. The scale of the project was unheard of up until then. People from both films and games were once again hooked on the idea of this convergence of the two media. Among the many features, they picked up on the realism of the game, the detail and the size of the map; the adult theme of the story and how we digitally scan real actors that became the characters in the game. The production values of *The Getaway* started to sound like a Hollywood blockbuster rather than your average videogame. Such was the case that we attracted all sorts of media attention as the game debuted on December 11, 2002. We found that *The Getaway* appealed to the audience on many levels – some liked the blend of story-driven action/adventure, whereas others took pleasure of retracing their taxi journey back to the hotel when they last visited London.

Katie Elwood: I think the initial success can be credited to the ambition of the game; the fact that it promised a real London, with real locations and a real story that was going to drive the player to the end. I think the continued success is that we delivered this and some more. Once gamers actually got their hands on *The Getaway* they realised the cinematics and realism were just the icing on a very substantial cake.

How far do you think you can take the concept of *The Getaway*, beyond addressing criticisms aimed at the first game?

CWK: I don't think there is a limit that anybody can put to creativity, as 'the concept' of *The Getaway* could be boiled down to the idea of a perfect marriage of film and videogame. I would be the first to admit the final result was far from perfection, but nevertheless, it offered a new take on what this concept means and perhaps a glimpse of what might be possible in the future.

KE: I think *The Getaway* showed us what was possible. I think we spent three years just praying it would come off and when it did we realised how much further we could go. We still have plenty more to come but we are unable to say any more at this time.

What impact do you think *The Getaway* will have on the way PlayStation2 games are made in the future?

CWK: We tried to engage the audience on an emotional and intellectual level. Being the interactive medium that it is, videogaming is a very powerful tool to do so. While it's fun for ten minutes to run about aimlessly collecting stars, and millions of us have been doing that for the last 20 years, we looked toward movies and literature for inspiration. We wanted those who may not normally play videogames but have seen or read about the game to pause and think, "I'd like to give that a try."

KE: I think the key thing for developers is to never lose sight of what they imagine is possible. It is very easy to cut corners and once you start it is a downward spiral. Integrity to a concept, when you're working alongside technology, is one of the hardest things to overcome. We have learned to be bullish and push the barriers of what people think the console is capable of.

What was the biggest setback during the five-year development period?

CWK: The fact it was such a labour-intensive project made it difficult to bring everything together as a cohesive whole until the latter stages of development. The job's only half done even when all the streets have been walked along with photos of each and every building captured on camera. The photos still had to be processed and placed in the game. The same laborious process applied to the animations and dialogue. In the last six months, the game finally took its shape and it was really exciting to see the vision we had three years ago come together and a big sigh of relief to those who supported us to the end.

KE: For me, transforming *The Getaway* from a PSone to a PS2 game was hard.

Are there any games you could pick out as strong influences; titles that can't be readily recognised by players?

CWK: I wouldn't say influences as such, but the ambition and the innovation definitely reflected some of the games I played when I was a child. That period was particularly exciting to see developers constantly trying out new ideas and pushing what was possible with the hardware.

KE: As the script writer, my influences came from outside games. We looked at a lot of gangster flicks – 'The Long Good Friday' and 'Get Carter', to name a couple. Also Jake Arnott has some good insights into London's underworld.

And what about films? Were you looking at more than just gangster films?

CWK: Gangster flicks old and new gave us the look and feel of the game, but we

also looked to action movies for some of the shoot out sequences. Frank Carter's 'Disturbance in Soho' level, for example, borrowed many elements from Michael Mann's 'Heat'.

Did you feel at all restricted working on PS2? Do you feel it's the ideal medium for a game like *The Getaway*? Or, rather, does it provide the ideal audience?

CWK: It worked both ways, I think, because we tried to make it appeal not only to gamers but action-movie lovers as well. I have no doubt that there is a massive overlap between the two cross sections and the PlayStation2 was ideal for that because of its DVD playback capabilities and its adult consumer audience.

KE: I think the same people who play games go to the cinema and hire videos.

Also, the DVD capabilities of the console make it a cross-market product.

More than any other console the PS2 has the image and the adult consumers to carry *The Getaway*.

What did you want the player to feel with *The Getaway*?

KE: Gripped.

CWK: Like being on a rollercoaster. Excitement at the start, then a build up of anxiety and we start to unfold the story; as the penny drops, a pure rush of adrenaline to the end with a lot of screaming in between. It's funny the parallels you can draw from that because some people who might be too scared to go on a rollercoaster at the beginning sometimes come out loving it, which is the same as those who mightn't have played a videogame before *The Getaway*.

What compromises were made during development with regard to content and subject matter? Did anything explicit have to be censored or chopped out?

CWK: It was difficult at times because in many ways videogames are still in their infancy and many people still regard them as toys. We didn't want that as we believed videogames should be able to address themes and issues we see in movies, television and literature. Why can't videogames have access rights to the emotions and intellect of its audience?

KE: We came up against a lot of censorship issues which, I'm happy to say, we fought all the way. I'm glad we persisted. There is no reason why game developers should not be addressing themes and issues we see in the movies, television and literature. We didn't set out to write a shocking story. We just wrote a story. Games can provoke thought too. If you dumb it down you're just insulting your audience. They are over 18, I think they can handle it.

Speaking of which, what happened with BT? Did the company agree to having its likeness being used, but have no idea of how it was going to be employed?

CWK: We set out to build the most realistic representation of London possible, and we sourced our material from the streets, all the buildings and all the cars, etc. It made sense that we used BT, but we had a meeting afterwards and we agreed that it wasn't very appropriate, so we took them out and apologised.

KE: We set out to build London as it is. When creating vans our artists made the vans they saw the most. It made sense that we used BT. They didn't agree, we took them out and said sorry.

How do you feel about shops charging more for preowned copies of 'first edition' copies of *The Getaway*, containing the BT-related violence?

CWK: If there are any new copies left then I don't think shops should charge the customer any more than the normal price, but if it's preowned then I think it's great that there is such an interest in this 'limited edition'.

How pleased were you with the finished game?

CWK: I'm filled with a sense of accomplishment, and of course with hindsight there will always be things that I would have liked to have done differently. The strongest feeling I have now though is which direction I should be heading in next as there are so many ideas to explore.

KE: Happy now. After a few months of leaving it in the drawer I can play it and feel proud. But... we all know that we can improve.

How do you feel about *The Getaway* being played by children?

CWK: It's wrong because the game is rated 18 for obvious reasons. I don't think parents and games outlets have any excuses for letting *The Getaway* end up in the hands of children.

KE: The BBFC rating means that is illegal for retailers to sell this game to under 18s. It is also there for a reason – to help consumers make an informed choice – in other words a parent looking for a gift for a child should take the rating into consideration.





**True Crime: Streets Of LA** wears its *GTA* inspiration on its sleeve, with a free-roaming cityscape and lashings of violence. It's set for Xbox at the moment, but a PS2 version may follow if the game does *GTA* numbers

random brutality. Both Hammond and Vercetti are vicious gun-toting scumbags, but it's okay because it's a defensive do-or-die measure. Both games are steeped in lawlessness, GBH and bloodshed, but they're not depraved.

### The future of mature content

*Driver 3* is mooted to contain all manner of versatility over its previous incarnations; the ability to swim, for example, which is all admirable mooring, but one that may see it stepping from the heart of what *Driver* is all about with the same kind of trepidation that Tanner had stepping away from his vehicle in *Driver 2*. It's the *GTA* lineage in full effect; if you've got cars, cops and robbers, then

## Most publishers seem to see successful games as Escher sketches, only ever deciphering parts of the puzzle, instead of the full picture

you've got to spice it up with more than just hi-octane chase scenarios, which are so PSone these days. You'll be needing an entire trifle of USPs – you'll be needing post-gangster cool and a better-than-movie level of scripting, and every other thing that's been mentioned, because that's what the *GTA* series has already managed to establish.

*True Crime: Streets of LA* is the current great white hope for Xbox owners, a mature bunch who've been shut out by *GTA*'s exclusivity agreement with Sony. It'll feature seamless on-foot gunplay integrated with



free-rom driving around the mean streets of a many-squared-mile city of sin, and it won't be the last. Borne from middleware, an entire state of such cities are due to blossom out from under the nutritious furrow that's been carved by *GTA*, leeching away into a cluster of pale imitation and offshoot clones.

Most publishers seem to see successful games as Escher sketches, only ever managing to decipher certain parts of the puzzle, instead of the full picture, when they focus and attempt to reverse engineer content for their own instalment. So what will they extract from *Vice City*, as they all inevitably will? A slab of licensing, wrapped around some vicious, uncompromising adult violence? Well, that's part of it.



If profit is prophet, then this is where we'll see things going; elaborate cityscapes, trumpeted as 'living and breathing' by the press releases, sprawling playgrounds that become the canvas for the acting out of an entire game, where you're given objectives during your wanders, and not before. It'll be dark, wanton, gratuitous stuff, and it's where the smart money will be going.

And when you hear "It's *GTA* but, y'know, for kids"? That'll be a different kind of darkness altogether.



The *Driver* series has, in some respects, always broken new ground, but expect instalment number three to feature a much grittier edge. Reflections promises the ability to swim. Has its designers played too much *GTA*?









the making of...

# The making of... TimeSplitters

In an extended article dedicated to the stories behind the creation of the world's most remarkable games, Equip talks to Free Radical Design about how it created not one, but two beguiling firstperson shooters on PS2

Original format: PlayStation2  
Publisher: Eidos Interactive  
Developer: Free Radical Design  
Origin: UK  
Original release date: 2000/02

**S**peaking to Free Radical Design directors **Karl Hilton**, **David Doak** and **Steve Ellis**, it occurs to **Equip** that a mark of ambition, real ambition, is not to have what many people would regard as a dream job. It's to *leave* it.

**Did you have any doubts about leaving Rare, even for a moment?**

**David Doak:** I was the first of the Free Radical founders to leave Rare and, although I was completely sure that I didn't want to work there any more, it was surprisingly difficult to actually commit to the practicalities of going to work one day and quitting. After all, I would be walking out on a game industry 'dream job'. Working on *GoldenEye* had been a fantastic experience but deep down I knew that it was time to move on and with the right people that experience could be bettered elsewhere. It's funny – I remember driving home from Rare that afternoon feeling very excited and confident. Then, shopping at Morrisons, which was pretty busy at that time of day, I was thinking: 'All these people don't have jobs. Hmm. Just like me...' That kind of thing can give you the fear.

**Karl Hilton:** Like most choices in life, it wasn't black and white. I loved the job I did at Rare and had worked very hard to get to the position I was in. I was very enthusiastic about the





James Cunliffe, lead animator: "The way I try to combat hardware issues is to find a way of doing most of the computations offline, or tricking the viewer that they are looking at something that they're not..."

project I was on, and I hate leaving something before it's finished. On the other hand, I did feel I had achieved everything I could at Rare and that the time was clearly right for a move in a new direction. I was always confident about my future.

**Steve Ellis:** At Rare I was earning a decent wage in a very secure job which, for the most part, I enjoyed. I could afford to eat and always knew I'd be able to pay my bills every month. Naturally, giving all of that up was a difficult decision. It's an easy think to talk about over a few drinks, but actually going through with it is an entirely different matter. As it happens, I made my mind up before the 1998 Christmas holidays and then had two weeks to make sure I really wanted to go through with it before I actually handed in my resignation on January 4.

Aspiring towards greater creative autonomy, or recognition, or financial reward – but often all three – the late '90s saw a number of figures in the development community, of varying stature, break from established codeshops to form their own studios. Flush with the success of the 32bit era, major and middleweight publishing houses were, at the time, ambitious, acquisitive and ostensibly, if not in actual fact, amenable to bouts of largesse when impressed with the right name and pedigree.

Think: Ion Storm.

Think: Confounding Factor.

Think: Elixir.

Think: so many more – the Eighth Wonders, and all those other defunct devcos of recent years.

The nascent Free Radical Design – Ellis, Doak and Hilton – had their time with *GoldenEye* as a bargaining chip – not to mention distinguished tenures at the UK's premier development house. This opened doors, but did not always guarantee any form of red carpet treatment – nor, indeed, meaningful negotiation...

**Was the process of meeting and negotiating with publishers easier or more difficult than you had imagined? How many publishers did you speak to?**

**KH:** It was a very different experience with each publisher we talked to. Some were very open and interested, some were very cautious, and others seemed to be out to lunch. It was interesting and frustrating at times.

**SE:** In the end, I think we spoke to around six publishers. The responses varied massively, from long meetings with junior members of some publisher's staff culminating in a 'We're not interested' response, to a short meeting and 'We're definitely interested' with the directors of another publisher. We were asking for a seven-figure sum of money. One publisher asked what

we could produce for £60K – that negotiation ended shortly afterwards.

**DD:** Any creative industry is dogged by middle men, errand boys, and timewasters. The real frustrations begin when you find yourself trying to negotiate with people who simply have no power and just get paid to talk. Only when people who are empowered to make decisions and commitments get involved do things actually happen. The amount of 'tyre kicking' we got from some prospective publishers was insufferable – it's not much fun having someone who clearly knows nothing about making games (usually with the job title 'producer') asking a never-ending stream of inane questions. Many were blinded by the Rare glamour, which was still pretty shiny at that stage – "But, guys, what did you actually do on *GoldenEye*?"

**Why Eidos?**

**SE:** Eidos, at the time, could do no wrong. We had been very impressed with how they'd handled the *Tomb Raider* franchise and hoped for a similarly impressive performance for our first title. They readily agreed to our terms, and then left us alone to make the game with very little interference.

**KH:** They seemed to like what we had to say, and offered us the funding model we asked for. We got to speak to the people at the top



Ben Newman, lead character artist: "The style of the *TS* characters was decided by a combination of two factors: I wanted to stay well away from the bulky, American style of character design that was saturating the FPS genre at that time, and I'd never used a 3D package before. I built two or three practice models, and everything after that went into the game"



**"Any creative industry is dogged by middle men, errand boys, and timewasters. The real frustrations begin when you find yourself trying to negotiate with people who simply get paid to talk"**









everything yourself because then you know it will be done the way you want it to be done, but in the end it just isn't possible and you need to hire people. It's a scary prospect for a small company – we couldn't afford to make mistakes, because there was very little slack in either our budget or timetable.

**KH:** It's daunting when you first start interviewing. When you are a small company, each employee makes up a significant percentage of your workforce, so you have to get the right people. We recruited from a number of different sources and I think we were very fortunate with the talent that we managed to find. Knowing people within the industry and in education was a good starting point for getting candidates.

**DD:** Finding people you can trust and then trusting them is a difficult and nerve-wracking process. You must never compromise on personnel out of time pressure – it will always come back and bite you on the arse later.

Worried about hiring the right staff for your start-up is natural. But what is it like to join an unproven venture?

#### How did you come to join FRD, James? What was your initial impression of the company?

**James Cunliffe:** I first met the founder members of FRD when I was employed to do the animation for *Perfect Dark* on their team at Rare. My first reaction to FRD was one of fear. The company had been running for a little over a month when I first turned up. In that time Steve [Ellis] had been working very hard on the game engine and had managed to get a vector graphic representation of Karl [Hilton]'s first corridor running on a PC. I had just left Rare's (arguably) flagship project to join a company with no tangible assets. It was then announced that **Hazit Zala** and myself would design the animation system. It was clear that we had all taken on a huge amount of work.

It's worth noting, at this point, that *TimeSplitters* was not originally intended as FRD's debut. The

decision: to produce a PS2 launch title in a little under a year. Following the delivery of an EB2000 PS2 dev kit, and with an initial team of ten – which would, by the end of the project, grow to a modest group of 16 – work began on *TimeSplitters* in earnest.

#### Was it always your intention to make *TimeSplitters* a multiplayer game first and foremost?

**KH:** Yes, *TimeSplitters* was always meant to be a fast-paced multiplayer experience. With that in mind, a lot of the fun things that happen are based on repeatedly playing it and other FPS games, to see what everyone enjoyed and what works and what doesn't. Ideas and concepts are vital but really good gameplay often comes down to fine-tuning elements after they go in. As games get more complex, it is something that is much less possible to do these days.

**SE:** In some respects, I think it might have been better if it had only been a multiplayer game –

Let's be frank: FRD's desire to create, from scratch, a PlayStation2 game in a year seemed almost quixotic at the time. The company's success in doing so was due, in part at least, to avoiding the 'wish list' idealism that typified other projects – half a dozen names spring readily to mind – by other nascent devcos with comparable backgrounds. Luminaries at other companies, labouring beneath the oppressive weight of reputations forged on previous games with past employers, sought to beat their own benchmarks, redefine genres. FRD, by contrast, decided to create a fun, fast, technically proficient FPS with a clear onus on multiplayer, its content determined by what could physically be achieved within the allotted deadline.

#### How difficult was it to create a first-generation PS2 title? What problems did you experience?

**SE:** Unlike the majority of developers, we were starting from scratch rather than

### Free Radical decided to create a fun, fast, technically proficient FPS with a clear onus on multiplayer, its content determined by what could physically be achieved within the allotted deadline

initial plan was for a different game, one that – as the team may yet return to it at a later date – Doak, Ellis and Hilton are reluctant to discuss. From the very beginning, the team had envisaged a fairly standard short- to mid-term future for the company: to take two to three years, Doak tells **Equip**, to create the best game they could in that timeframe "...just like everyone else."

But when the release of the PlayStation2 was delayed, FRD made a quite remarkable

the Story mode was often misunderstood.

**DD:** But Imagine our surprise when it was revealed that the PS2 seemed to be missing a couple of controller ports!

#### Was *TimeSplitters* carefully planned in advance, or did much of its content evolve on the fly?

**SE:** It almost all evolved on the fly – there was no time to plan.

**DD:** Completely winged it.



Notre Dame is one of *TS2*'s varied destinations. "The locales definitely helped make my job more interesting," says Graeme Norgate. "I loved the fact that I could do a spaghetti western tune, for instance, or the over-the-top Egyptian Tomb piece"





Newman: "A lot more thought and planning went into the character design on *TS2*. I did a lot of drawing before I started building models. The style I wanted to get was a cross between caricature and comics"

porting an engine from another platform. This was a definite benefit to us – our engine was designed from the ground up to take advantage of the PS2's unique architecture. When we got our first prototype PS2 dev kit, it took less than 24 hours to get the engine up and running, admittedly at a low framerate. After about a week, it was running at pretty much the same speed as the final version. The main challenge was in ignoring all of the hype surrounding PS2's performance, and predicting what a realistic level of performance would be.

Whereas Sony was claiming 75 million polygons per second, we concluded that we'd be surprised if even 10 per cent of that figure was achievable – and we were right. Apart from that, the biggest problems were the dull things – dealing with peripherals such as controllers, memory cards, and the I/O from the CD.

**KH:** For the artwork, a next-generation console offers more power than those you have been working on previously. So from that point of view it was exciting and refreshing.

However, there are always limits on the

graphics performance and those will always be reached quickly if you are trying to push the graphical quality as far as possible. Right from the start we decided that framerate was going to be of critical importance to the look and feel of the game. For that reason we had some quite strict limits on the artwork, which, combined with the tight deadlines, provided us with a big challenge. I'm hugely proud of what we achieved.

**Ben Newman:** We obviously had poly and texture budgets, but as *TimeSplitters* was the first game I worked on, they didn't really bother me – maybe if I had worked on a fighting game before with 6,000 or something polys per character it would have been more of a problem. Now that I've worked on characters with fairly high poly budgets, I think I'd probably find it quite hard to go back to the 1,500 polys per character that we had on *TimeSplitters*.

**Graeme Norgate:** Well, it was different to what I was used to. Having been a Nintendo boy through and through, it took a bit of adjustment to get used to. There are always memory limitations, and disc access times cut down on



Newman: "I wanted the characters to look real but not realistic. So we built meshes with exaggerated proportions, but textured them fairly realistically"

**"We didn't want to be just another promising start-up which embarked on an open-ended development ramble. The idea of talking big, then having to apologise, was not appealing"**

the amount of music streams we could have had, but you'll never hear a muso happy with console hardware – there's always a list of things that could be better.

**DD:** We did our sums and stuck to them. We were careful. Actually, Steve [Ellis] did the sums and he was bang on.

"Towards the end of developing *TimeSplitters*," recalls Cunliffe, "I left work at 1:00am to pick up my girlfriend from the train station. Once I had dropped her home, I went back to work. I have learned to laugh at that sort of thing now. My girlfriend still can't."

**Were you always confident of your ability to ship *TimeSplitters* in time for PS2 launch?**

**KH:** Yes, absolutely. We broke the work down into logical, manageable chunks and everyone was very disciplined in their personal time management. Also, as this was our first title, everyone was very highly motivated to make it a good game and to get it out for launch.

**DD:** We didn't want to be just another promising start-up which embarked on an open-ended development ramble. The idea of talking big, then pissing around for five years and having to apologise, was not appealing.

The *GoldenEye* association cuts both ways. Doak reflects that: "It opens doors and gets people's attention. It is useful. Sometimes

people's expectations become insanely inflated. Then it is not useful."

With the specialist press rarely wavering in its appraisal of FRD as 'The *GoldenEye* boys', *TimeSplitters* – inevitably – was subjected to obvious comparisons.

**How did you feel about the critical and commercial reception of *TimeSplitters*?**

**SE:** Critically, it was very well received, aside from the occasional misunderstanding of the Story mode and comparisons to that of *GoldenEye*. Commercially, it sold well, but not as well as some lower quality titles with more bullish publishers.

**KH:** I think the game did an outstanding job of putting FRD on the serious developer map. It is always pleasing to have a game that is widely recognised as being of a high quality. Commercially, you always hope for a big hit and







Slick, peerlessly fluid and blessed with a pick 'n' mix architecture, *TimeSplitters 2* is an outstanding multiplayer game

*TimeSplitters* did fine. I think it could have done a few more units, but it held its ground against some very big titles, so that was satisfying.

**DD:** Critically, it was generally pleasing but we took a few *GoldenEye* daggers in the back. I'd also question the objectivity of some of the reviews for other PS2 FPS titles – but then I'm bound to whinge. Commercially, hmmm. I've seen worse games sell more.

**Hazit Zala:** I was extremely pleased and felt suitably rewarded by the critical acclaim that *TimeSplitters* achieved. The commercial achievements were less convincing, especially in the States where it never seemed to get the market penetration it deserved.

*TimeSplitters* hit stores in October 2000, the relative disappointment of its performance in the US balanced by a solid showing on European high streets. FRD's pragmatism paid immediate dividends: an improved deal for a sequel across three platforms, and the opportunity to craft, with respect to its forebear, an altogether more 'complete' package. Although Eidos was keen for another deadline-defying miracle, FRD was in a position to decline, but still completed *TimeSplitters 2* in another impressive timeframe: a mere 23 months.

**Was *TimeSplitters 2* an easier title to produce after your experience with the original game?**

**KH:** It was a whole new experience to make *TimeSplitters 2* as the game was such a big step forward from the first one. There were a whole set of new challenges to overcome, and I would certainly say that it was a much harder game to get right than the first one. Although experience is useful, it doesn't stop the pressures involved in making a complex

game, on time, less stressful. Probably the opposite in many ways.

**SE:** The experience we gained on *TimeSplitters* was clearly useful for the PS2 version of *TimeSplitters 2*, but right from the start we set our sights much higher for *TimeSplitters 2* in terms of performance and features, so there was a lot of new work to do. We did manage to make use of the PS2 Performance Analyser on a couple of occasions, which was helpful in locating the bottlenecks in our code.

**DD:** It felt like less of a 'moonshot' than *TimeSplitters*. Less winging it and more attempting to integrate useful process and control into the development cycle.

With *TimeSplitters 2* doubtlessly fresh in the minds of many **Equip** readers, there's little point in relating its manifold virtues here. With a vastly improved singleplayer component, notable for its outstanding layered structure – although Doak points out: "One man's 'excellent reward system' is another man's 'this game frikkin' sux c0z I hav 2 pl4y the sh1TTy story to unlock kewl characterz and boards' – FRD addressed criticisms of its inaugural release in the best possible manner. Widespread critical acclaim followed – but America, again, wasn't listening.

**How pleased have you been with the success of *TimeSplitters 2*?**

**DD:** I've seen worse games sell more.

**SE:** European sales have been acceptable, but American sales have been disappointing in comparison to lower-scoring titles. It's frustrating to see that having a good game is only part of what you need for a game to succeed – so much is dependent on how capable a publisher is at marketing. Lower-quality games with good marketing often outsell

good games with average marketing.

**JC:** My respect for the game and my expectations for its commercial success weren't even. I think that *TimeSplitters 2* is five times the game that the original *TimeSplitters* was. I think that the game engine of *TimeSplitters 2* was superbly reworked from a very strong starting block. The art was vastly improved and a true style for the *TimeSplitters* world was found for *TimeSplitters 2*.

I always thought that *TimeSplitters 2* would do very well commercially, and it did, but I think that the subtly humorous, comic book twist that we lent to it didn't sit well with the established firstperson market. Firstperson games have classically been pseudo-military or heavy metal frag fests. I can't help but wonder how a game of the fundamental quality of *TimeSplitters 2* would have done if it were slightly more tailored to an already established market. But what a boring prospect...

Which brings us, full circle, back to the topic of ambition. For FRD, perhaps, it's now to create a game that conquers the States; although *TimeSplitters 2* has sold over a million copies to date it is, relatively speaking, something of an underachiever. But with a current staff of just over 50, and now working on two games consecutively, Free Radical Design is anything but. It would have been so easy for the devco to embark upon an over-ambitious, impractical and expensive attempt to live up to unrealistic expectations. Looking at other start-ups that have laboured for four or five years with no tangible result, you could surmise that a mark of ambition, real ambition, isn't to just plan to create an outstanding, triple-A game – it's to actually ship it.

In a little over three years, FRD has just done that. Twice.



To read complete interviews with seven members of the Free Radical Design team – revealing more information on the creation of both *TimeSplitters* games – visit [www.edge-online.com](http://www.edge-online.com)



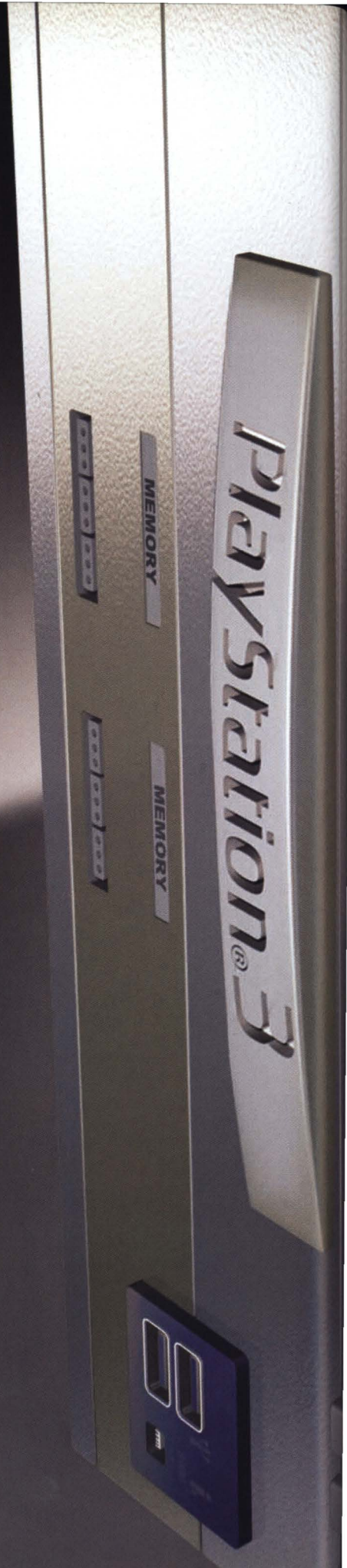


# The big picture

Unofficial PlayStation3 concept render

CG: Chris Stoker

# PlayStation®3



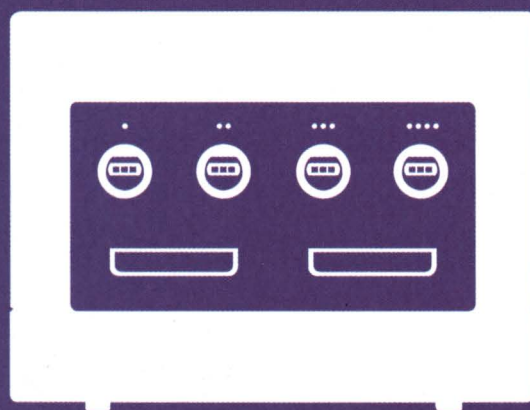






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